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Cover: Mill Creek Sanctuary entrance. Photo by Dickson J. Preston.



## CHRISTMAS COUNTING, 1970 -- ADVENTURES AND RESULTS

*David W. Holmes*

"Song Sparrow?" - - - "New high!"  
"Any Longspurs?" - - - Snow Bunting? Hey, good!  
Where was it? Sure it wasn't an albino House Sparrow?  
Anything we missed? - besides Myrtle Warbler!  
OK, How many species is that? . . ."

We have sneaked in to the end of a Christmas Bird Count compiling session and through the business and banter we find a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction clearly present. This, in spite of a missed bird or two and near total fatigue apparent on more than one participant. What creates such a glow? The good feeling of warmth after cold? Coffee, or other medicinal preparations? The change of activity for most of us? Simple suspense of who got what? Healthful aspects of a day outdoors (in freezing rain?!)? To each his own I guess, but the 16 Maryland Christmas Counts this year provided something for everyone.

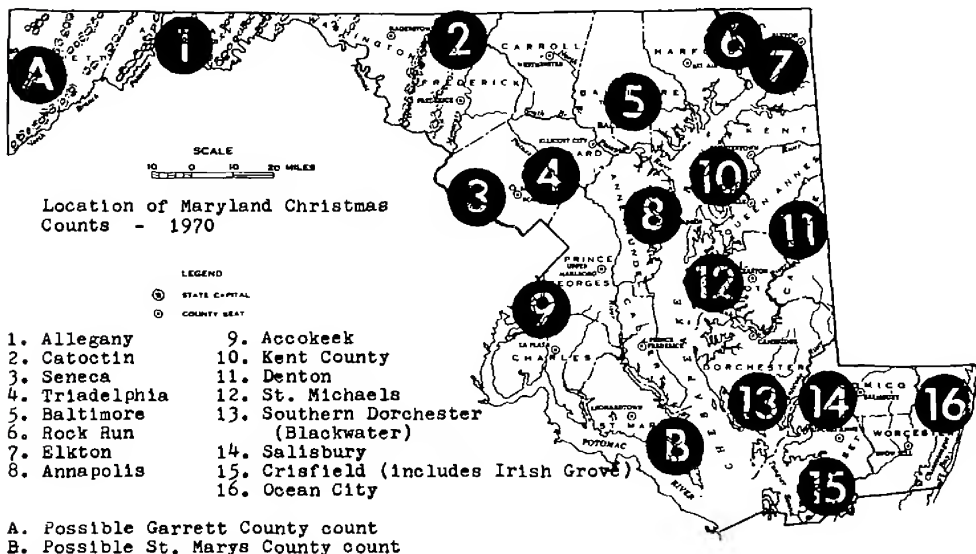
It was very gratifying to realize that there were both more of us who enjoy doing this and more who enjoy it more. The body count of observers was the highest ever. Including some of us who go count-hopping, our lists show 456 observers on the Maryland counts. Last year, we listed 369, and for the previous four years, observer totals were under 330. Party-hours were also up. Even after an editorial adjustment of one report, Maryland counters put in 1,383 party-hours this year. All other count years except 1965 list under 1,200. May we continue to enjoy this rise in enthusiasm.

Where did we count?

The Maryland counts were taken in the same locations as last year (see map) and this is as it should be. Consistent coverage of an area over a number of years is one of the most valuable aspects of these counts. Eight counts are currently done on the Western Shore, 7 on the Eastern Shore, and one at Elkton which is rather in between. The two areas I think might be significant additions to our counts are in Garrett County (A), because of the 1,000-foot elevation difference from Allegany County, and in St. Marys County (B), to include both Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay areas and as much land as possible. The markers

only show general location ideas for each projected count; they are not intended to be specific suggestions of center and area. The District of Columbia count does not appear on this map, but it covers very little of Maryland. The Virginia portion of the Seneca count is actively covered, but the West Virginia portion of the Allegany count probably is not.

Also, count number 9, Accokeek, deserves very special comment. It was established in a 3-square-mile area along the Potomac in 1932, long before the 15-mile diameter circle became standard. Rather than fighting the problems of expanding, of losing consistency of coverage, and of overlaps with two other counts (D.C. and Fort Belvoir), the Accokeek people have kept their area and coverage the same for 39 years, so their counts are among the most valuable in the country in terms of measuring bird population changes and effects of variables other than those caused by inconsistency of coverage.



Why do we count? To find out what's there.

So, what was there?

BIRDS! - just shy of a million (997,553) individuals of 171 species not counting an Osprey (St. Michaels) and a Varied Thrush (Baltimore) seen during the count period but not on the days of their respective area counts.

The only birds appearing for the first time on Maryland counts were the Ovenbird (Triadelphia), Spotted Sandpiper (Seneca, Va. and St. Michaels), and Ringed Turtle Dove - and with this bird, we are in some trouble. Robbins' Birds of North America says this is "a common cage bird that has become a local resident in central downtown Los Angeles, Tampa (St. Petersburg), and Miami." This Maryland bird must have been

a caged bird at one time, but it has lived, free flying, in a neighborhood of north Baltimore for well over a year. It was counted, with the notation that it must have been an escaped bird, because it is wild in the environment, competing successfully for food, and successfully escaping any predators in the area. This approach would rather scandalize those purists among us who refuse to recognize the existence of escapees, foreign, or "semi-wild" species. But, let's let the experts fuss with this problem as they have already done for years and years. The bird is there! What Mr. Cruickshank does with it in American Birds (formerly Audubon Field Notes) will be interesting. The Seneca compiler thinks their Goshawk was probably also an escaped bird. This one presents an even worse dilemma since it is possible as a wild bird.

What was the rarest or most unusual bird? Let me hedge a bit by giving a list of single birds in the State: On the basis of the records I have, the Ovenbird is the most unlikely at this time of year (no previous records) with the Varied Thrush next (one previous record).

The most common bird - ? Thirty-one species were reported on all 16 Maryland counts this year, with 8 additional species missed on only one count. Eleven species were reported in State-wide numbers of over 10,000. Of these, Whistling Swans were seen on only 8 counts, Canada Geese on 12. Allegany County missed Red-wings and grackles. The others were seen on all 16 counts. All of these numbers were up from last year, but only 4 were 6-year high counts: Canada Goose, Starling, Red-wing and Slate-colored Junco.

One phenomenon that must be mentioned is the Red-eyed Towhee situation. This year's single count high was 442 at Ocean City, the second highest total for that count. On ten counts, towhees produced either new count high totals or at least 6-year highs. And on one additional count, they tied the previous high. Compare the Ocean City figure with the State-wide figures for most years. - Why? Use your own imagination. It's as good as mine.

Green Heron	- Rock Run
Goshawk	- Seneca
Pigeon Hawk	- Ocean City
L. Yellowlegs	- Ocean City
Marbled Godwit	- Ocean City
Glaucous Gull	- Ocean City
Wood Thrush	- Ocean City
Orange-cr. Warb.	- Ocean City
Ovenbird	- Triadelphia
Rose-br. Grosbeak	- Salisb'y
R. Turtle Dove	- Baltimore

In count period,	
Osprey	- St. Michaels
Varied Thrush	- Baltimore

Red-winged Blackbird	- 332,187
Canada Goose	- 286,642
Common Grackle	- 144,020
Starling	- 88,534
Common Crow	- 19,598
Whistling Swan	- 16,529
Brown-headed Cowbird	- 13,583
White-thr. Sparrow	- 13,001
Slate-colored Junco	- 12,775
Mallard	- 11,686
House Sparrow	- 10,161

Rufous-sided Towhee	
State-wide totals, 1970	- 1,637
	69 - 486
	68 - 392
	67 - 946
	66 - 415
	65 - 460



Any kind of blanket statistical comparisons immediately run afoul of blackbirds. These creatures move around, often in vast numbers, and are completely unpredictable. For example, this year's Red-wing total of 332,187 compares with last year's 50,853. The reason is certainly not an appallingly successful nesting season. The birds' roosts happened to be within the circles during count week this year. Last year, some of them were not. For chanciness and sheer numbers they are much worse than winter finches. This, obviously, was not a winter finch year. Last year, a tenth as many were reported there. For an even more maddening example, in 1965, the State-wide total of Common Grackles was 7,810. In 1966, an enormous roost at Ocean City pushed the grackle count to 890,820. The following year, 38,000 were reported State-wide. Think what this does to birds-per-party-hour figures, to count total comparisons, etc., or to those trying to produce meaningful population trend figures, or just the amount of food 890,000 grackles are eating from somewhere! Canada Goose and Whistling Swan counts do similar things to the Bay counts as these birds wander up and down the Bay, here one day, there the next. The individual counts which are high such as Ocean City, Kent County and St. Michaels, fluctuate widely depending on the blackbirds and geese, but are always higher than elsewhere in the State because the birds are there.

So, can Christmas counts reflect population trends?

The House Finch invasion was begun innocently enough in 1962 with 11 birds reported. By 1966, there was a peak of 289 which was not surpassed until 1969. In 1970, we reported 550 birds from 6 counts, and another count listed them during the count period. The Great Black-backed Gull has increased from 55 birds on 4 counts in 1956 irregularly to the 689 birds on 12 counts this year. Pileated Woodpeckers have apparently increased from numbers in the low 20's in 1956 and 1960 to 87 in 1968 and 88 this year. White-crowned Sparrows, as mentioned in the Christmas Count article in last year's Maryland Birdlife, have increased from about 100 birds per year ten years ago, to 347 this year. Cardinals are up and bluebirds seem to be holding their own but not showing a real pattern of increase. On resident birds that generally pick an area and stay the season, the Christmas count samplings can reflect population trends fairly accurately - depending, of course, on weather, reliability of observers, consistency of coverage, etc.

Special congratulations are in order to the people who took the following counts: Seneca - for apparently the most dedicated bush beaters. The Seneca people compiled State high counts for 12 of the species seen on all 16 Maryland counts and logged almost 3 times as many Brown Creepers as the next high. One other bird that is an excellent indication of bush beating is Winter Wren. Seneca had 30 while the second high was 26 at Ocean City. Most counts turn in from 1 to 6 of these birds. Seneca did enjoy a dramatic increase in number of observers and party-hours this year. One hopes they will keep it.

St. Michaels gets the Glassy Eyeball award for their consistent owl coverage. This year broke no records, but 32 Screech Owls and 31 Horned Owls are still way above second place Crisfield's 15 and 19 respectively.

Seneca and Baltimore compilers (as they certainly should!) share the Super-Seller award for getting the most people in the field, 61 on each count. The Unbelievability award goes to Crisfield, whose participants (more than double the previous high) established 75 new species high counts and added 3 new species to the count list. Crisfield, Seneca, Allegany, and Salisbury are real object lessons in amount of participation correlated with numbers of birds found. If one is to have a Blue-footed Booby award, it might go to Craig Jeschke on the Baltimore count who was sent to walk a power line and walked the wrong one, then had to wait  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours in the wind for the rest of his party to finish their birding and figure out places he might be found.

Dedication is anyone who did 4 or more counts.

The Unanswered Question of the year came from the Crisfield tally session when Danny Bystrak asked "How many is 25 minutes worth of grackles?" - and no one even guessed.

Mystery is why the Ocean City count on Tuesday attracted 38 participants, Crisfield on Wednesday, 35, and Blackwater on Thursday, 13!

Glee is the bird you found that wasn't supposed to be there.

Luck was the sonic boom at Blackwater which scared up a small marsh-full of ducks including 3 species no one else recorded.

Disappointment was the birds on the "in the area during count period but not on count day" list.

Condolences go to Kent County for their 48,135 Starlings. The second high count was Baltimore's 5,010. Only one year of the previous 6 were that many Starlings reported in the whole State.

Fun was the 16 Maryland Christmas Counts.

Dick Kleen's idea last year of printing a short summary of each count was a good one, so here is this year's summary (new high totals are marked with asterisks):

1. Allegany - 35 people, 15\* parties, 58\* party-hours.  
54 species, 4,483\* individuals. 7 Marsh Hawks, 1 Barred Owl, and 2 Carolina Chickadees were new to the count list. 6-year high counts for 29 other species, previous highs doubled or more for 13 of those. State high counts for Ruffed Grouse-18, Turkey-25, Pileated Woodpecker-22, and Black-capped Chickadee-118.
2. Catoclin - 11 people, 4 parties, 41 party-hours.  
63 species, 9,943 individuals. Common Goldeneye new to count list. Brown Thrasher recorded for second time. 8 new count highs. Crow roost numbered 4,400 birds. Tree Sparrow low. State high counts for Ring-necked Pheasant-35 and Horned Lark-654.

3. Seneca - 61\* people, 15 parties, 179\* party-hours.  
91 species, 24,564\* individuals. Goshawk, Spotted Sandpiper and Snow Bunting new to count list. 6-year highs for 43 species, State high counts for 20 species. 2 Grasshopper Sparrows, 11 Short-eared Owls and a Turkey were good.
4. Triadelphia - 28\* people, 8 parties, 109\* party-hours.  
79 species, 23,195 individuals. Woodcock and Ovenbird new to count list. A lingering Baltimore Oriole was good. State high counts for Ring-necked Duck-50 and Brown-headed Cowbird-3,850. New high totals for 7 species.
5. Baltimore - 61\* people, 19 parties, 19 feeders, 124½\* party-hours.  
78 species, 21,961 individuals. Common Loon and phoebe new to count. High counts for 27 species but the count is only 5 years old. State high counts on Common Merganser-80, Purple Finch-22, and House Finch-251.
6. Rock Run - 16 people, 4 parties, 29 party-hours (low).  
76 species, 15,244 individuals. Cooper's Hawk, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Catbird for the second time. State high counts for Green Heron-1 and Rusty Blackbird-47.
7. Elkton - 13 people, 5 parties, 43 party-hours.  
63 species, 43,100\* individuals. Hooded and Red-breasted Mergansers, Red-headed Woodpecker new to count list. High count totals for 21 species. Large numbers of Red-wings, grackles and Canada Geese raised total individuals to 4 times previous high. 93 Field Sparrows high for the area.
8. Annapolis - 45 people (lowest in 6 years), 18 parties, 103 party-hours.  
94 species, 22,150 individuals. A Barn Owl possibly new to the count. L. Shrike and chat (1 each) had not been seen for at least 6 years. 6-year high counts on 12 species. State highs on 6 species. The other oriole here.
9. Accokeek - 4 people, 4 parties, 32 party-hours.  
64 species, 3,108 individuals. 5 species seen for first time in 6 years or more. 11 birds reached 6-year highs. 2 Snow Buntings probably new to count. 35 Oldsquaws was a high count. State high on Red-headed Woodpecker-26.
10. Kent - 37 people, 8 parties.  
105 species, 228,000 individuals. Common Loon, Brant, Greater Yellowlegs, Barn Owl, Ipswich Sparrow for first time in 6+ years. Shoveler and Golden Eagle only here and Blackwater. White-crowned Sparrows-162 very high. State high counts on 14 species.
11. Denton - 13 people, 10 parties, 55 party-hours.  
73 species, 5,686 individuals. 6-year high counts on 13 species. Screech Owl and Chipping Sparrow in period were first in 6+ years. Second 6-year sightings of Wood Duck, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shin, Cooper's Hawk and Yellowthroat.
12. St. Michaels - 18 people, 9 parties, 79 party-hours.  
99 species, 99,595 individuals. Spotted Sandpiper new to count list. 26 Mute Swans were only ones in the State. 15 State high counts including 10,000 crows. 6-year high counts on 12 species. 74 Dunlins double previous high.



13. Southern Dorchester (Blackwater) - 13 people, 6 parties, 71 party-hours. 104 species, 68,633 individuals. Count highs for Bufflehead-511, Ruddy Duck-1,500, and Coot-58. High counts tied for Common Egret-8 and Golden Eagle-2. New low on Field Sparrows-9. Virginia Rails found here and Crisfield. State highs on 9 species.
14. Salisbury - 28\* people, 7 parties, 60\* party-hours. 84\* species, 21,886 individuals. The only Rose-breasted Grosbeak in the State. Snow Goose, Woodcock, Short-eared Owl and Vesper Sparrow also added to count list. 35 species hit new high totals on this 5-year-old count.
15. Crisfield (includes Irish Grove Wildlife Sanctuary) - 35\* people, 9 parties, 162½\* party-hours. 127\* species, 288,000\* individuals. Wow! Information has been strewn throughout this article. State's only Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers and Short-billed Marsh Wrens. 6 birds found only here and Ocean City. Grasshopper Sparrows only here and Seneca. 20 State high counts. 1,152 Swamp Sparrows may be the highest on the continent.
16. Ocean City - 38 people (tied high), 10 parties, 158 party-hours. 142 species, 161,405 individuals. 16 birds seen on no other Maryland count. 13 new high counts, House Wren, chat and Ipswich Sparrow tied previous highs. 490 Bobwhites more than double previous high of 225. 39 State highs for birds seen on other Maryland counts. Glaucous Gull and Wood Thrush seen for second time in 23 years.

Then, there are the sanctuary counts, again listed so we have a chance to find out more about what lives in our MOS Sanctuaries. Unfortunately, the Rock Run count includes birds seen on a walk down to the Susquehanna, so includes at least 5 species which were probably not found within the sanctuary. The real sleeper was the Swainson's Thrush at Mill Creek - a species not found on any of the official Christmas Counts and one that is distinctly unusual in Maryland in winter.

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MILL CREEK, Jan. 3. Clear, calm, 26-31°. Snow cover, water open.  
3 observers, 3 parties, 9 party-hours.

Great Blue Heron	2	Downy Woodpecker	13	Golden-cr. Kinglet	7
Canada Goose	211	Blue Jay	35	Starling	8
Mallard	1	Common Crow	18	Myrtle Warbler	10
Red-tailed Hawk	2	Fish Crow	1	Red-winged Black.	152
Red-shouldered Hawk	1	Carolina Chickadee	28	Common Grackle	6
Marsh Hawk	1	Tufted Titmouse	22	Cardinal	33
Sparrow Hawk	1	White-breasted Nut.	1	American Goldfinch	32
Bobwhite	14	Brown Creeper	14	Rufous-s. Towhee	12
Mourning Dove	1	Winter Wren	1	Slate-col. Junco	210
Belted Kingfisher	2	Carolina Wren	16	Field Sparrow	8
Yellow-shafted Flicker	24	Mockingbird	2	White-throated Sp	486
Red-bellied Woodpecker	8	Catbird	1	Swamp Sparrow	2
Yellow-bel. Sapsucker	3	Robin	12	Song Sparrow	150
Hairy Woodpecker	2	Swainson's Thrush	1	41 sp., 1,546 indiv.	

CAREY RUN, Jan. 23. Clear, 20-25 m.p.h., 31<sup>o</sup>, 6-8 in. snow cover.

1 observer. 3 party-hours, 3 party-miles.

Ruffed Grouse	1	White-br. Nuthatch	1	Slate-col. Junco	15
Downy Woodpecker	2	Cardinal	2	Tree Sparrow	1
Black-cap Chickadee	35		7 species,	57 individuals.	

ROCK RUN, Jan. 15. a.m. 1 observer. Includes a walk to the river.

Canvasback	(1)	Blue Jay	15	Ruby-cr. Kinglet	1
Common Merganser	(3)	Common Crow	12	Starling	43
Turkey Vulture	1	Fish Crow	(3)	House Sparrow	21
Red-tailed Hawk	1	Black-cap Chickadee	1?	Rusty Blackbird	(5)
Sparrow Hawk	1	Carolina Chickadee	19	Common Grackle	6
Bobwhite	4	Tufted Titmouse	9	Brown-head Cowbird	6
Mourning Dove	6	White-br. Nuthatch	4	Cardinal	18
Belted Kingfisher	(1)	Brown Creeper	1	Rufous-s. Towhee	2
Yellow-shaft Flicker	2	Carolina Wren	2	Slate-col. Junco	20
Red-belly Woodpecker	1	Mockingbird	5	Field Sparrow	4
Hairy Woodpecker	2	Catbird	1	White-thr. Sparrow	75
Downy Woodpecker	2	Golden-cr. Kinglet	2	Song Sparrow	10

( ) = species probably not on sanctuary 36 species, 310 individuals.

IRISH GROVE, Dec. 30. Clear. 7 observers. 4 parties.

32 party-hours (28 on foot, 2 by car, 2 in canoe)

Pied-billed Grebe	9	Screech Owl	2	Golden-cr. Kinglet	4
Great Blue Heron	35	Great Horned Owl	7	Ruby-cr. Kinglet	10
Canada Goose	3	Belted Kingfisher	5	Water Pipit	1
Mallard	8	Yellow-sh. Flicker	21	Cedar Waxwing	55
Black Duck	335	Red-belly Woodpecker	2	Starling	18
Green-winged Teal	43	Hairy Woodpecker	2	Myrtle Warbler	236
Scaup Duck (sp.)	9	Downy Woodpecker	5	House Sparrow	3
Bufflehead	19	Tree Swallow	3	E. Meadowlark	105
Turkey Vulture	24	Common Crow	17	Red-wing	1,764
Red-tailed Hawk	2	Fish Crow	3	Boat-tail Grack.	16
Rough-legged Hawk	1	Carolina Chickadee	40	Common Grackle	166
Marsh Hawk	7	Brown-headed Nuthatch	41	Cardinal	38
Bobwhite	1	Brown Creeper	2	American Goldfinch	11
Virginia Rail	10	Carolina Wren	5	Rufous-s. Towhee	1
Killdeer	3	Long-bill Marsh Wren	14	Savannah Sparrow	2
Common Snipe	7	Short-bill Marsh Wren	2	Sharp-tail Sparrow	19
Least Sandpiper	8	Mockingbird	9	Seaside Sparrow	4
Dunlin	1	Catbird	1	Slate-col. Junco	12
Gt. Black-back Gull	5	Brown Thrasher	5	White-thr. Sparrow	42
Herring Gull	67	Robin	342	Fox Sparrow	15
Ring-billed Gull	32	Hermit Thrush	8	Swamp Sparrow	147
Mourning Dove	1	Eastern Bluebird	8	Song Sparrow	55

66 species, 3,902 individuals.

1524 Mt. Royal St., Baltimore

## MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD SIGHTED IN OLDTOWN, MARYLAND

James Paulus

On December 23, 1970 at 4:15 p.m., I was looking out my picture window observing some Cardinals at the feeder when a blue colored bird flew into a tree next to the feeder. As I keep a check-list of species using the feeder, I was anxious to see whether what I assumed was an Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*), perched with its back toward me, was going to visit the feeder. However, this bird ignored the feeder and after perching for several seconds, it flew to the ground, landed, and picked up what seemed to be a small insect. It consumed the insect on the ground and then flew back to the same tree. This time, the bird was facing me and clearly showed a blue breast. I knew then that this was not the Eastern Bluebird, but a possible Mountain Bluebird (*S. currucoides*). I immediately grabbed my binoculars (7x35 wide angle) and observed very closely for four minutes while this bird flew to four different trees and made five trips to the ground after insects. The bird exposed itself to me at all possible angles, as close as 50 feet and never farther than 90 feet. When it finally flew away in a westerly direction, I was absolutely convinced that it was a Mountain Bluebird.

This bird was completely blue in color except for the solid white belly. The blue breast was not as dark as the rest of the blue and the over-all blue was somewhat lighter than that of the Eastern Bluebird. The tips of the primaries when folded over the back appeared to have some brown color in them. The bird seemed to perch higher on its legs than the Eastern Bluebird, and had a more horizontal posture. On one of its trips to the ground, it hovered momentarily as if it had lost sight of its prey. The flight from perch to ground was fast and direct. The bird always landed on the ground, and when flying back to a perch, always used the lowest horizontal limb. The trees in question are all small white ash (*Fraxinus americana*) under 20 feet in height.

I am well aware that this bird rarely occurs east of the Great Plains. In fact, the only records I can find east of the Mississippi River are 2 in Wisconsin and 3 in Ontario. I should add that I am very familiar with all plumages of the Eastern Bluebird. Although I hunted for three days, I did not see the Mountain Bluebird again.

## MONTGOMERY COUNTY AVOCET

Oldtown

Isaac C. Sanchez

On Labor Day, September 7, 1970 at about 6:30 p.m., my wife and I observed an American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*) feeding near the north end of Needwood Lake, just north of Rockville. The bird was on a small mud flat beside Needwood Road rather than on Needwood Lake proper. It seemed to ignore our presence even though we were no more than 100 feet from it.

The avocet was accompanied by 1 Western, 2 Pectoral, 1 Solitary and 2 Semipalmated Sandpipers and a yellowlegs. The next morning the avocet and yellowlegs were gone, but 3 more Western Sandpipers, a Least and a Spotted Sandpiper had arrived. Morning and afternoon checks of the area were made for three successive days after the original sighting, but the avocet was not seen again.

This is the first Maryland sighting of an avocet away from the coastal plain.

1623 Yale Place, Rockville

## AN OREGON JUNCO AT COCKEYSVILLE

*Frances B. Pope*

Early in the afternoon of January 17, 1971, as I watched the birds feeding in my yard, one junco caught my attention. Its back was toward me as it clung to the trunk of a tree eating peanut butter spread there, and the solid black of the head and nape was distinctly separate from the reddish brown of the back. A positive identification of Oregon Junco (*Junco oreganus*) was made when the bird allowed a frontal view showing the 'bib' formed in front by the black of the breast curving upward on either side to meet the black of the head. Collectively, all this black of the head forms a hood which contrasts sharply with the rusty sides and back. He seemed a slither bird than the Slate-colored Junco next to him, both in length and weight.

I photographed the bird that day, not really expecting to see him again, but he continued to feed in my yard almost daily until March 26, 1971, always in association with Slate-colored Juncos. His greatest food preference at first was peanut butter, and it was there I would always find him if he was around; but with the arrival of warmer weather near the end of February his preference changed to mixed seed thrown upon the ground. His ability to cling to the trunk of the tree eating peanut butter interested me and I learned from the Bent volume on juncos that although these birds are called 'ground-seed foragers', they have been known to cling to tree trunks and eat the sap and small insects that collect after a sapsucker has drilled some holes.<sup>1</sup>

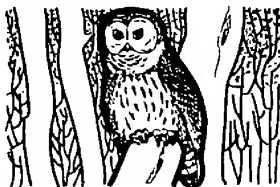
11121 Powers Ave., Cockeysville

1. Bent, Arthur Cleveland. 1968. Life Histories of North American Cardinals, Grosbeaks, Buntings, Towhees, Finches, Sparrows, and Allies. U. S. Nat'l Mus. Bull. 237, Part II.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

Three Audubon Nature Camp scholarships have been awarded this spring: one from the Helen Miller Endowment Fund, one from the Operating Fund, and one by a special gift from the Amateur Gardeners Club of Baltimore. The recipients were Kathleen Klimkiewicz, John Willets, and Annette Drummond.

## THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE



It seems to be a common tendency on the part of most of us to look back, from time to time, at the wake we've made, the furrow we've plowed, or the swath we've cut, to see how far we've come or how well we are doing. Aside from the possible satisfaction to be derived, such a backward glance can give us little assistance, except for the probability of showing up our errors. On the contrary, looking backward can be an expensive diversion. It is generally more judicious to keep an eye on the road ahead with only an occasional sideward glance at the mileposts along the way.

If an anniversary can be referred to as a "milepost", then this is a good time and place for MOS to look at what lies ahead at the beginning of our second quarter-century. It is quite possible that by the time you read this, we shall have tallied our two-thousandth member. We now have sanctuaries across the length and breadth of the State. Our budget is balanced and we are entirely out of debt.

Of real significance is the realization that within our membership are countless people of experience and expertise on which to draw. Articles and reports in BIRDLIFE attest to this. Less obvious to the membership at large, but conspicuous to the administration at both the State and Chapter levels, is the vast number of qualified and willing people in our ranks who are giving nature-oriented instruction to the youth of the area. Finally, we can boast of more than a smattering of sophisticated and dedicated conservationists in the Society, people who are not merely concerned, but are working at it.

So, we can face the challenges of the years ahead with confidence. Your Board of Trustees is keenly aware of the possibilities ahead. Just a few days ago, the Board took action inaugurating two projects calculated to broaden the work and the influence of the Society. An informal arrangement is being made with the Maryland Fish and Wildlife Administration embracing a "cooperative wildlife management agreement" whereby each organization may call upon the other for advice and assistance in the management of its wildlife program.

With an eye on what organizations in a few other States are doing, the Board endorsed in principle, subject to final approval at the next meeting, a plan whereby privately owned lands can be "registered" with MOS and posted with an appropriate sign.

Slightly in the future, but already apparent, is the need for and

capability on our part to provide one or more nature museums, structures not unlike the Common Room at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. Such could house and display a vast array of exhibits, charts, drawings and photographs, etc. A nature library and a meeting-room would necessarily be incorporated in the plan or plans.

Of course, the operation of a nature museum and library entails a need for a curator-interpreter, a sizeable budgetary item; but this is the very thing to make the whole idea, including the sanctuary itself, dynamic and useful to the utmost. Do you think this idea fanciful? Not so to one who has seen what you have so lately accomplished.

V. Edwin Unger

## NESTING BEHAVIOR OF A PAIR OF SPARROW HAWKS

Richard Krejci

During my Christmas vacation from Johns Hopkins Evening College in December 1969 and January 1970 I decided to attempt to attract a pair of Sparrow Hawks (*Falco sparverius*) to nest within sight of my office window. I built a nesting box according to specifications and placed it 15 feet high on a telephone pole near two locust trees, about 40 yards directly in front of my office window. This area consists of about one acre of weeds and grasses, surrounded by Colgate Creek, a quonset hut, and a driveway lined with telephone poles, at Dundalk, Maryland. Adjacent to Colgate Creek are several telephone poles, one of which was used primarily for feeding by the pair of Sparrow Hawks. Beneath this feeding pole were found many pellets, several feathers, fur, bones, and pieces of flesh and insects. On the other side of the driveway is a field of approximately three acres. In back of my office building there was a field of about ten acres. Here I observed the Sparrow Hawks for long periods of time either hovering or diving in search of food. Now a lumber yard has disposed of the prime hunting grounds for the Sparrow Hawks, but they still remained in the area.

The Sparrow Hawk or American Kestrel is our smallest falcon. The female is slightly larger than the male. The adult male has a rufous spot in the center of a slate-blue crown, as well as a rufous back and upper tail. The tail has a dark terminal band and a narrower white tip. The primaries are dark brown and the secondaries, slate-blue. The face and throat are white with heavy black stripes below and behind the eyes. The underparts are whitish with a tawny breast which is spotted with black. The adult female has dark brown and black striping on the back, wings and tail. The underparts are white, but streaked with dark brown. The immatures are very similar to the adults, but the young male is more heavily spotted and streaked on the breast, and his tail feathers are brown tipped. The young female is hard to tell from the adult female. Both immatures are more plump with short tail feathers. The plumage of the very young birds has a silken sheen which is soon lost.

The nesting box had been set in place in January 1970. During March



and April a Sparrow Hawk inspected the box several times. In April, a female went into the box numerous times and my hopes heightened. What follows is a brief resume of my observations from April 29 through July 31, 1970, relating to the mating, egg laying, incubation, and feeding of the young.

On April 29 the female was frequently in the vicinity of the nest box and the next two days the male was with her most of the time. Copulation was first observed on May 5, reached a peak during the period May 11-18 and was last noted on May 22. Copulation took place at all hours of the day, but was more frequent in the morning hours (e.g., five times on May 12 between 8:42 and 9:25 a.m.).

On May 8 I checked the box and found it empty except for nesting material I had inserted in January. Prior to April 29, Starlings had been stealing this nesting material.

On May 11 the Sparrow Hawks were setting up a territory of about one acre around the bird box. The male and female chased two meadowlarks from this area. Both the male and the female entered the box and the female remained inside from 12:20 to 1:18 (possibly laying an egg?). The next day she remained in the box from 12:15 to 12:45. The male was seen to give her three mice and an insect. In almost every case, whether insect or mouse, the head was torn off and eaten first. It seems that all hunting for small mammals was done outside the immediate vicinity of the nest, whereas insects were caught in the surrounding fields.

The male brought 4 mice to the female between 10:15 and 12:30 on May 14; this was the most food I saw delivered within such a short time period. On June 3 the male and female were first seen eating 17-year locusts (cicadas), which they captured in flight. Mice continued to be the major food supply throughout the nesting cycle, but on a few occasions a sparrow was taken and once the male ate a young pigeon. By the end of June, grasshoppers had replaced the cicadas in the diet of the Sparrow Hawks. From June 30 on, the female made frequent trips into the box with grasshoppers, indicating that the young had hatched. On July 1 she took 11 grasshoppers into the box between 8:50 and 11:43, and on the afternoon of the same day she took in 8 grasshoppers from 3:17 to 4:32.

A visiting female Sparrow Hawk arrived on July 6 and landed about a foot from the nesting female. The nesting bird spread her wings to shield her vole from the intruder, and finally chased it away. On this same day the female brought 21 grasshoppers between 9:32 and 12:00, and the head of a young bird was visible for the first time at the entrance to the box. Two days later two young males and a young female were seen through the entrance hole. The males were recognized by their rufous crowns and slate-blue wings.

Late on July 13 a young bird was seen hanging out of the box, and on the 19th three young had left the box by 11:45 a.m. (two of them were only 3 to 5 feet from the box), and the fourth left at 12:13. The adult male did almost all of the feeding from this time on until the young

could hunt for themselves. When the adult female approached, the male drove her away. Grasshoppers comprised most of the diet until July 23, when at least two mice were brought in.

By July 22 the young were able to fly about 120 yards, and late on the 29th or early on the 30th the young disappeared from the area and were not seen again—although the female was present all day on the 30th, and two adults on the 31st. I conclude that the adult male had taken the young out to hunt and from there they will start their new adventures.

In summary, the Sparrow Hawk has remarkable eyesight and spends much of its time searching for food from telephone poles, wires, and dead branches. While perched, it frequently pumps its tail and nods its head. It also hovers in its search for food in fields, open country, roadsides or suburban areas. The major part of its food consists of insects, mainly grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, caterpillars, dragonflies, cicadas, locusts, and occasionally mantids. Many white-footed mice and meadow voles are eaten, as well as other small mammals and small birds, chiefly sparrows.

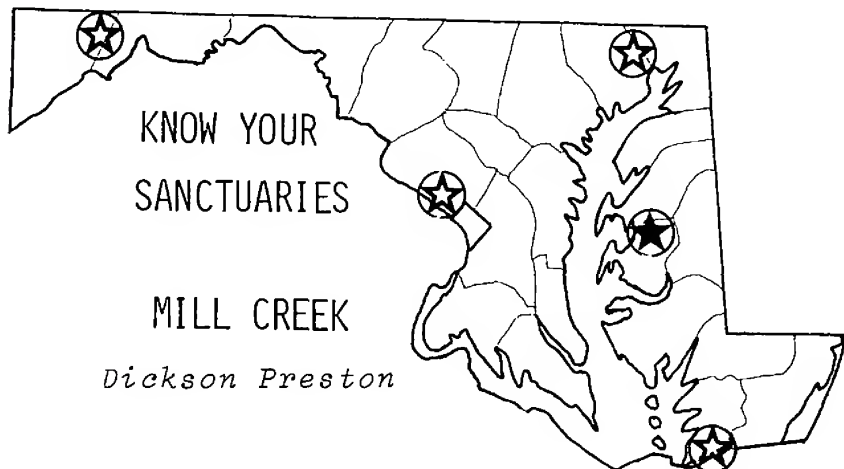
The nest consists of a natural cavity or crevice of a building, a suitable sized woodpecker hole, or a bird box. Both sexes search for a suitable nesting area with frequent chattering by one as the mate investigates a potential cavity. The three to seven white eggs, splotched with brown, are laid without any additions to the selected nest site.

The male usually takes the initiative in the mate-attracting display with a series of power dives. Once the mate has been won and they pair off, the female takes the initiative in calling and posturing the male. To insure fertilization, copulation takes place frequently until egg laying begins. Eggs are laid at intervals of 1 to 2 days. The female does most of the incubation, but the male occasionally sits. The eggs can be left unattended for about one to two hours at a time when the birds preen. The incubation takes about 30 days. During this entire period the male does almost all of the hunting for his mate and himself. He calls the female off the nest when he arrives with food.

After the young have hatched, the male continues to bring the food to the female. The female tears the meat apart and feeds it to the young. When the nestlings are about 21 days old, the female begins to leave whole prey in the nest. The young leave the nest about 30 days after hatching and then are fed almost entirely by the male. At this point, the male becomes very protective and screams whenever a human is near. After about two weeks, the young are able to hunt on their own, but it takes another couple of weeks before they are adept at hunting.

3125-D Wallford Drive, Baltimore





On a sunny May morning, Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary in Talbot County, Maryland, is a leafy paradise. Its towering trees—oaks, sycamores, beeches, loblolly pines—are alive with warblers and other migrant birds. Barn Swallows swoop and twitter over the surface of the stream from which the Sanctuary gets its name. Along a trail a chipmunk chirrup, while overhead Scarlet and Summer Tanagers announce their nesting territories with melodic fire. Mountain laurel and May apple, dogwood and lady's slipper, pawpaw, trillium, trailing arbutus burst into leaf or bloom. In the boggy bottoms, spring peepers chorus their happiness amid a rich variety of ferns and reeds.

This 154-acre expanse of hill and valley, streambed, woodland and grassy meadow is part of the statewide network of perpetual wildlife refuges maintained by the Maryland Ornithological Society. For Eastern Shore residents, its rugged beauty has a special attractiveness all its own because it slashes through the flat and monotonous sandy coastal plain. In contrast to the level farmland and swamp forest that make up most of the Eastern Shore, Mill Creek Sanctuary offers ridge and gully, cool woodland depths and sparkling pools.

#### HISTORY

No one knows when Mill Creek first acquired its name. In early days it was one of half a dozen streams in Talbot County which were casually called Mill Creek for the simple reason that they were the site of a grist or saw mill. Only this one name stuck, probably because it was the largest of the group.

As early as 1858—and possibly much earlier—there was a grist mill near the headwaters of the creek. It was shown on the Dillworth map of Talbot County of that date, and was known as Sherwood's mill. In 1877, when Lake's Atlas of Talbot and Dorchester Counties was published, it was called Hardcastle's mill for Captain E. L. F. Hardcastle, a Mexican War officer who became one of Talbot County's biggest landowners. These

maps show the mill pond as stretching for nearly a quarter of a mile along two forks of the creek at a spot which today is east of U. S. Highway 50 and about half a mile upstream from the northern Sanctuary boundary.

Clear traces also exist of an earthen dam which at one time apparently formed a pond within the present Sanctuary limits (see Spring Trail). Whether this also served a mill, or was built for some other purpose, is unknown.

However, a roadside inn known as Beaty's Tavern was operated in this same area shortly after the Revolutionary War. It was marked on Griffith's map of Maryland, published in 1794. The map locates the tavern on the north side of the Wye Church road at a point that appears to coincide with Sanctuary land, and which would place it near the earthen dam.

Most of the acreage that became the Sanctuary was wooded stream valley, too rough for tillage. It was worked for timber, however, and an old logging road that runs through the southern sector now is incorporated into the Laurel Trail.

The Talbot County Bird Club, an M.O.S. chapter, became interested in acquiring a sanctuary in 1958, when a fund was created from gifts to the club and profits from the annual showing in Easton of the Audubon Screen Tour (now Audubon Wildlife Film) series. Leader in this movement was Richard L. Kleen.

By May, 1963, interest centered on the 108-acre tract on Mill Creek then known as Jack's Field (although it was scarcely a field). Robert Sharp II, an Easton Realtor and club leader, spent many volunteer hours in negotiation, and in November an option was signed giving the club (and M.O.S.) six months in which to raise funds to buy the land at \$75 per acre. About \$8,000 was needed, of which only a small fraction was in the Talbot Sanctuary Fund. The seller eventually waived timber rights but reserved one acre, which he still owns, as a possible future dwelling site.

After six months of frantic and successful campaigning, the option was exercised the next June, and title in the name of M.O.S. was taken on August 4, 1964. Funds for the purchase were oversubscribed, and the names of nearly 50 persons and organizations contributing \$100 or more are listed on a bronze plaque on the Sanctuary bulletin board.

Through the generosity of Mrs. Royce R. Spring, an additional 30 acres on the north (upstream) side of the roadway were purchased in February, 1965, in memory of her husband. Another 17 acres adjoining the eastern boundary of the original tract were acquired at the same time, giving the Sanctuary its present total of 154 acres.

Two related actions, which benefit all M.O.S. projects, were obtained through Talbot County political officials. State Senator John Clarence North secured passage of a bill exempting all M.O.S. sanctuary land throughout the State from Maryland real estate tax assessment, and

U. S. Congressman Rogers C. B. Morton, later Secretary of the Interior, helped grease the machinery to make contributions to M.O.S. tax deductible.

### LOCATION

Mill Creek Sanctuary is located eight miles north of Easton in the extreme north portion of Talbot County. It is easily reached from north south or east, for it is less than a mile from busy U.S. Highway 50.

From Baltimore or Washington, take U.S. 50 across the Bay Bridge and follow it southeast for approximately five miles beyond its branching with U.S. 301. Turn right onto either Md. Route 404 or Md. 662 (both go to the town of Wye Mills). From Wye Mills, follow Md. 662 two miles south past Wye Oak State Park to Mill Creek Bridge. At this point, Sanctuary land is on both sides of the road.

From Salisbury or Ocean City, take U.S. 50 north. Eight miles north of Easton, turn left onto Md. 662. The Sanctuary area begins about half a mile northwest along this road.

From Wilmington or Dover, take U.S. 301 south. Turn left onto U.S. 213 and follow it five miles until it ends at junction with U.S. 50. Cross U.S. 50 (road now becomes Md. 662), follow 662 three miles through Wye Mills to Mill Creek Bridge.

By water, the Sanctuary can be approached (though not reached, because it is above tide level) from either the Wye East River or Wye Narrows. Enter Skipton Creek south of Wye Landing and turn left (north) into the tidal portion of Mill Creek. Small boats can navigate this waterway about a mile.

### THE SHELTER

Functional heart of Mill Creek Sanctuary is the rustic shelter with fireplace, cooking grill and picnic table. This is located in a clearing on high ground just south of the roadway (Md. 662). It is reached by a path (actually the old logging road) that begins at the main sanctuary sign at the south side of the road and follows an easy grade up the hill.



Mill Creek's overhanging sycamores are reflected in a quiet pool. View south from bridge on Rt. 662.





The fireplace is dedicated to the memory of Nita Nevius (Mrs. Ronald A.), a charter member of the Talbot club and one of its most enthusiastic birders. A bulletin board with trail map, Sanctuary bird list and other data will be found nearby.

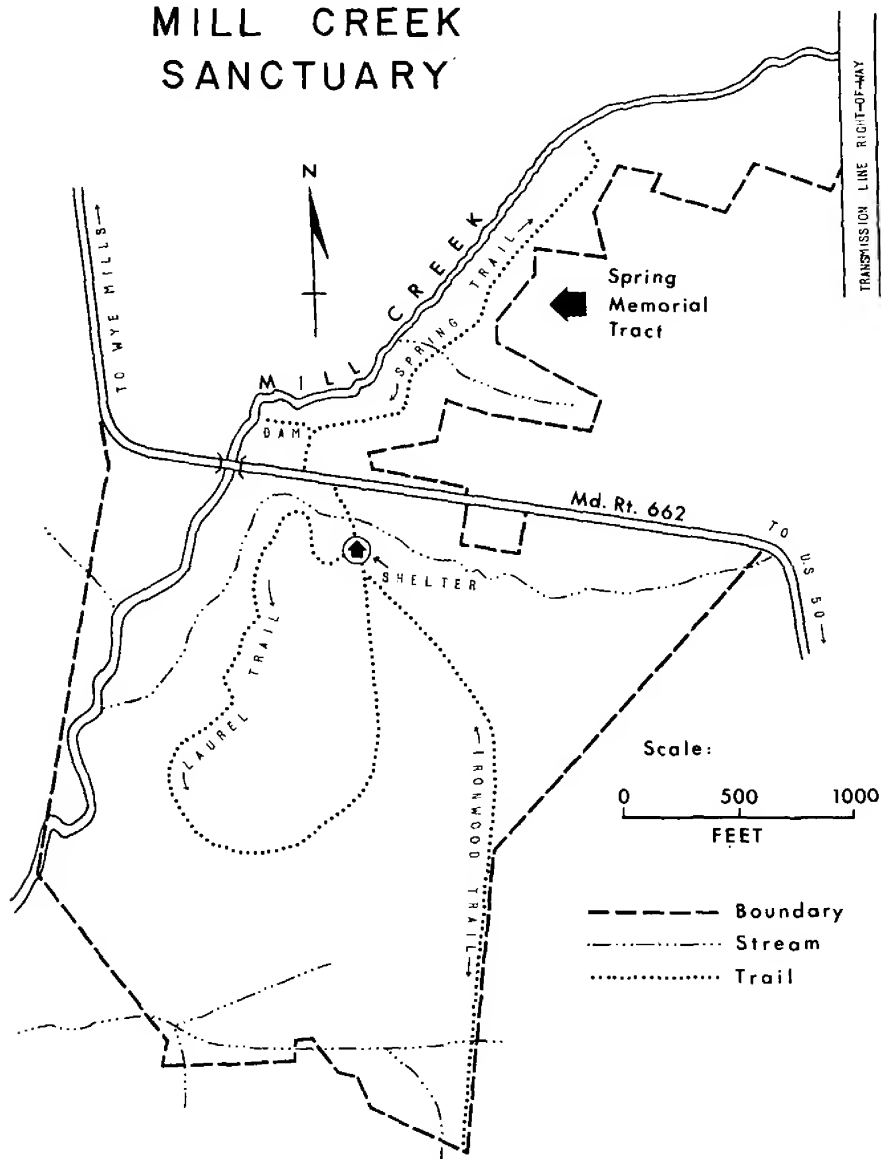
### TRAILS

Three marked trails take hikers deep into the Sanctuary's wooded acres. In line with M.O.S. policy of keeping the area as unspoiled as possible, they are—except for the Laurel Trail—little more than forest tracks marked by yellow blazes on convenient trees and stumps. They are maintained by volunteer efforts of Talbot Bird Club members and friends.

The Laurel Trail starts at the western edge of the shelter clearing (see map), crosses a





MILL CREEK  
SANCTUARY



On a rugged slope,  
a raccoon family has found a home  
near the Spring Trail.

streamlet via a log bridge, and loops through the far southwest reaches of the Sanctuary, returning to the shelter by means of the old logging road. It takes its name from the beautiful clumps of mountain laurel which grow thickly along the way.

Since 1966, the Laurel Trail's development and maintenance has been a special project of the Garden Club of the Eastern Shore. Under the chairmanship of Mrs. Herman Hollerith of Oxford, Md., nearly \$1,000 has been spent in clearing underbrush to provide more sun for the laurel, dogwood, holly and other fruiting plants, and in planting new shrubs and small trees as food sources for birds. Detailed planning for this project was contributed by Philip Barske, conservationist consultant of the Wildlife Management Institute of Fairfield, Conn. Plantings include Tartarian and Arnold's red honeysuckle, elderberry, bayberry, snowberry, chokeberry, winterberry and (scheduled for 1971) a new type of heavy-fruited cedar known as Canearti.

Vistas for overlooks also have been cleared at strategic places and two rustic benches provided. Garden club members continue to do most of the fertilizing, tagging, mulching and pruning themselves.

Highspots along the Laurel Trail include a raccoon's den in a bank to the right, near the beginning of the trail, a restful overlook and bench under a giant beech tree, and a huge white oak more than 12 feet in circumference deep in the woods.

The Ironwood Trail starts on the southern side of the shelter, meanders through second growth timber to the Sanctuary's southeastern boundary and follows that line for nearly a mile. It does not loop; visitors should remember that they must return the way they came. It is named for the many fine specimens of ironwood (*Carpinus caroliniana*), with their distinctive muscular-appearing smooth gray bark, which grow here and elsewhere in the Sanctuary.

The Spring Trail starts on the northern side of Md. 662 at a point marked by a boulder and plaque dedicated to the memory of Royce R. Spring.

It goes north and east on a wandering course along narrow ridges, into deep gullies and up steep slopes to end at a spot overlooking Mill Creek. Large beeches, red and white oaks are trail markers. At one point a trailing arbutus (the only one yet located in Talbot County) is the object of an annual spring pilgrimage by club members.

Near the beginning of the Spring Trail, a short side trail runs to the left along the crest of the earthwork which once apparently was a dam forming much of the Sanctuary's northern expanse into a pond. Tradition says that a mill—perhaps a saw mill—was located here, but this has not been authenticated. Archaeologically-minded explorers might yet solve the mystery of this obviously man-made structure.

Sixty years ago this section of the Sanctuary was dotted with examples of the American chestnut, and some senior club members can recall visiting Mill Creek to gather the sweet, spiny-husked nuts every fall. Today all that remains is an occasional ancient, rotted stump or a large log, or a trunk from which a few sprouts may grow until they in turn are wiped out by the blight that has destroyed this splendid tree.



Rotting log and large beeches  
along the crest of the dam  
testify to the earthwork's age



A young beech tree  
clings to the side of a steep  
ridge on the Spring Trail

## BIRDS

Between 1964 and the winter of 1970-71, a total of 148 species of birds were identified in Mill Creek Sanctuary. These included 31 different warblers and such unusual species as the Rose-breasted and Blue Grosbeaks, the Solitary Vireo, the Peregrine Falcon and the White-crowned Sparrow.

Among the warblers, the Prothonotary, Worm-eating, Golden-winged, Blue-winged, Brewster's, Cape May, Blackburnian and Wilson's are notable. Early May is, of course, the best time to visit the Sanctuary in search of migrant warblers, but local birders start looking for the Black-and-whites and Louisiana Waterthrushes as early as March, the Prothonotaries and Yellow-throated Warblers soon after. Myrtles, Pine and Palm Warblers and an occasional Yellowthroat or Yellow-breasted Chat may be found all winter.

At least a dozen warblers are definite or probable breeders in the area. All told, 61 species have been identified by song, behavior or nesting evidence as breeders. The complete breeding list (certain and probable) as of February, 1971, is as follows:

Turkey Vulture	Carolina Chickadee	Yellowthroat
Bobwhite	Tufted Titmouse	Yellow-breasted Chat
Mourning Dove	House Wren	Hooded Warbler
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Carolina Wren	American Redstart
Screech Owl	Mockingbird	House Sparrow
Great Horned Owl	Catbird	Red-winged Blackbird
Barred Owl	Brown Thrasher	Baltimore Oriole
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	Robin	Common Grackle
Belted Kingfisher	Wood Thrush	Brown-headed Cowbird
Yellow-shafted Flicker	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Scarlet Tanager
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Starling	Summer Tanager
Hairy Woodpecker	White-eyed Vireo	Cardinal
Downy Woodpecker	Red-eyed Vireo	Blue Grosbeak
Great Crested Flycatch.	Black-and-white Warbler	Indigo Bunting
Eastern Phoebe	Prothonotary Warbler	American Goldfinch
Acadian Flycatcher	Parula Warbler	Rufous-sided Towhee
Eastern Wood Pewee	Yellow-throated Warbler	Chipping Sparrow
Rough-winged Swallow	Pine Warbler	Field Sparrow
Barn Swallow	Prairie Warbler	Song Sparrow
Blue Jay	Ovenbird	
Common Crow	Kentucky Warbler	

In winter the species to be sought are naturally quite different. The Sanctuary lies outside Talbot County's Christmas Count territory, which is in the St. Michaels vicinity, but in recent years a group led by Richard Kleen has made its own Sanctuary Christmas Count with satisfying results (see *Maryland Birdlife* 26: 8-9 and 27: 9). Winter birds, some of them seen in flight, include the Whistling Swan, Canada Goose, Mallard, Black Duck, Pintail and other ducks, as well as the Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Catbird, Golden- and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Evening



Grosbeak (some years), Tree Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Slate-colored Junco, and Swamp and Fox Sparrows.

#### OTHER FLORA AND FAUNA

Much study remains to be done on Mill Creek's trees and shrubs, flowers and ferns, amphibians and mammals.

Very little scientific work has been expended in these fields, and much of what has been discovered has been more or less accidental. As when, for instance, a group of club members was engaged in removing a large dead tree which had been declared a menace to the newly built shelter. As the rotted trunk crashed to the ground, at least 50 flying squirrels leaped from its hollow interior and fled in all directions. That established to the satisfaction of the startled onlookers that flying squirrels inhabit the area, although none has been seen before or since. (They are strictly nocturnal creatures.)

Other mammals, more easily observed, include the Virginia opossum, raccoon, eastern chipmunk, gray squirrel, woodchuck, eastern cottontail, Virginia white-tailed deer, meadow vole, muskrat, shrew and probably the eastern red fox.



Mill Creek's giant trees open new horizons for both youth and adults.

Trees for the most part are second growth, indicating the area was extensively cut over 50 to 75 years ago. Some fine specimens of white oak (see Laurel Trail), beech, sycamore, loblolly pine and black locust remain, however. The rare seaside elder has been spotted along Mill Creek north of the bridge. A number of pawpaws are clustered on the roadway's northern side, and produce their exotic banana-like fruit in late summer.

Other identified trees and large shrubs are: green ash, box elder, black and choke cherry, devil's walking stick, flowering dogwood, black gum (tupelo), sweet gum, shagbark and pignut hickory, American holly, ironwood, mountain laurel, red maple, southern red oak, black oak, chestnut oak, pin oak, scrub oak, tulip poplar, redbud, sassafras, staghorn sumac and several varieties of willow. This is far from a complete list.

Among the many wildflowers are these: Jack-in-the-pulpit, skunk cabbage, day-lily, dog tooth violet, false Solomon's seal, blue-eyed grass, lady's slipper, false nettle, swamp smartweed, May apple, saxifrage, cinquefoil, wild strawberry, large-leaved white violet, blue violet, trailing arbutus, pink azalea, selfheal, pearly everlasting, Canada goldenrod, aster, yarrow, thistle and dandelion.

#### ACTIVITIES

Many of the Talbot County Bird Club's Sunday morning walks in spring (see annual programs) end at the Sanctuary, where members spy out warblers and enjoy a late breakfast around the shelter's fireplace. Visitors are welcome.

The club also has the job of maintaining the Sanctuary, and regular work parties are held in spring and fall at which trash is collected and trails checked for needed repairs and re-marking. These are known informally as the semi-annual beer can roundups. Visitors also are welcome to join these roundups.

Numerous school and scout groups have held picnics and nature hikes at Mill Creek, although no formal educational program is currently in progress.

#### PROCEDURE FOR VISITING

No reservations are needed, but visitors are advised to bring their own water supply. Toilet facilities are not available. Fuel for the fireplace is usually on hand, or can be gathered easily from dead wood in the surrounding area.

Trash disposal cans are located at the foot of the path leading to the shelter, and at the western end of Mill Creek bridge. These are emptied regularly by the State Highway Department, and trash accumulated at the shelter or elsewhere should be carried to one of them.

Superb stands of poison ivy will be found throughout the Sanctuary,



and visitors are warned to watch out for them, particularly away from the marked trails. Mosquitoes and ticks are also in good supply from late spring to autumn. Repellents are advised.

Good hiking shoes are recommended, as some of the trail routes are along steep hillsides and some of the best birding areas are in soft ground near Mill Creek. Boots ordinarily will be needed only if extensive exploration of the creek bottom is planned.



Once a giant chestnut, this is all that remains of this fine species which dotted the Sanctuary before blight struck it down.

Three principal requests are made of visitors to Mill Creek Sanctuary:

1. Clean up all trash carefully and deposit it in one of the disposal units, not in the fireplace.
2. Leave a note in the shelter bulletin board recording your visit and identifying any unusual birds or other wildlife or plants observed.
3. Relax and enjoy yourselves.

I wish to thank Richard L. Kleen and Robert Sharp II for their major assistance in the preparation of this report. The photographs were contributed by Herman Hollerith Jr. and Dickson J. Preston.

R. F. D. 4, Box 233, Easton

## MOS BLUEBIRD PROJECT, 1970

*Lawrence Zeleny*

An integrated MOS bluebird project was initiated in early 1970 in an effort to increase the seriously depleted population of the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) in Maryland. Details of the project were outlined in the December 1969 issue of Maryland Birdlife (25: 138-142). All MOS Chapters were urged to participate in the project. Reports were received from six Chapters and are summarized in the following paragraphs.

### ALLEGANY CHAPTER

The Allegany Chapter has maintained 19 bluebird nesting boxes since 1966. These are located on the open slopes of a former pasture at Carey Run Sanctuary. This year Eastern Bluebirds nested in 6 of the boxes, Tree Swallows in 6, and House Wrens in 4. Both Tree Swallows and House Wrens nested in one of the boxes. A black snake destroyed one brood of four bluebird nestlings in a box that was mounted in a manner readily accessible to snakes. This box was subsequently moved. Most of the other boxes were properly mounted on metal poles. No data are available on the exact number of young bluebirds fledged.

### BALTIMORE CHAPTER

The Baltimore Chapter participated very actively in the project under the enthusiastic and capable leadership of Mr. Burton Alexander. Eighty-eight persons volunteered to assist in the work and 300 or more nesting boxes were built. Records on the exact number of boxes actually set out and of the occupancy of the boxes by bluebirds are not yet complete. Preliminary indications, however, are that very few bluebirds occupied the boxes because of the great scarcity of these birds in the area.

It should be mentioned, though, that 29 young bluebirds were fledged on the grounds of All Saints Convent at Catonsville, in the Baltimore area. This was the fourth year that efforts were made at the Convent to help the bluebirds by setting out nesting boxes. This work was done by Sister Barbara Ann in connection with the Audubon Naturalist Society bluebird project and was reported by her in the September 1970 issue of Maryland Birdlife (26: 81-92).

### HARFORD CHAPTER

It was reported that no bluebirds occupied any of the nesting boxes set out by members this year in Harford County.

### KENT CHAPTER

The Kent Chapter erected 14 bluebird nesting boxes equipped with predator guards along woodland edges and hedgerows on Eastern Neck

National Wildlife Refuge. None of the boxes were used by bluebirds. Mr. Kenneth Spencer, in charge of the Kent Chapter project, stated that to the best of his knowledge not a single bluebird had been seen in that area during the 1970 breeding season.

#### ROSSMOOR CHAPTER

The Rossmoor Chapter in the second year of its project had 22 nest boxes on the grounds of the Rossmoor golf course. The boxes were maintained and monitored weekly by Mr. Richard Rule. Bluebirds nested in 5 of the boxes and fledged at least 28 young.

#### PATUXENT CHAPTER

In the fifth year of the cooperative Laurel Rotary Club and Patuxent Chapter bluebird project, 53 boxes were checked by Mrs. Eleanor Robbins and assistants. Eleven broods totaling 43 young were believed to have fledged, and an additional 18 young in 4 broods hatched and may have left the boxes successfully.

That part of the Audubon Naturalist Society bluebird project maintained and monitored by the writer at the Agricultural Research Center (ARC), Beltsville, Maryland, has been considered also to be a part of the Patuxent Chapter project. During the 1970 season, 47 bluebird boxes were checked at intervals of a week or less at ARC. Bluebirds nested in 35 of these boxes, raised 52 successful broods, and fledged 213 young. The effort to restore the bluebird population at ARC was begun in 1967. For at least ten years prior to 1967 few, if any, bluebirds nested in this area apparently due largely to the overwhelming competition by Starlings and House Sparrows for natural cavity nesting sites. Installation of Starling-proof nesting boxes in which House Sparrows were not permitted to nest appears to have restored the bluebird population to a reasonably normal level in a four-year period in spite of the continued heavy populations of Starlings and House Sparrows.

The entire Audubon Naturalist Society bluebird project in its fourth year accounted for the successful fledging of more than 800 young bluebirds in 1970, almost entirely in rural areas of Maryland and Virginia within 50 miles of Washington, D. C.

#### EASTERN SHORE GARDEN CLUBS

Although not a part of the MOS project, a number of garden clubs on the Eastern Shore of Maryland organized bluebird nesting box projects in 1970, largely through the efforts of Dr. Reginald V. Truitt of Great Neck, Stevensville. These garden clubs were well instructed, and set out a total of approximately 65 bluebird nesting boxes. As far as can be ascertained, no bluebirds used any of these boxes.

Likewise, no bluebirds occupied any of the nest boxes that were provided for them at Irish Grove Wildlife Sanctuary in Somerset County on the Lower Eastern Shore.

## COMMENTS

Results obtained during the first year of the integrated MOS blue-bird project indicate that the Eastern Bluebird is probably very scarce indeed during the breeding season in many parts of Maryland. Appreciable success was obtained only in those areas where nesting boxes had been maintained for one or more previous years.

Disappearance of the Eastern Bluebird appears to have become particularly serious on the Eastern Shore as evidenced by the Kent Chapter report, the Eastern Shore garden club projects, and the failure to attract bluebirds at the Irish Grove Sanctuary. This was also confirmed by the 1970 MOS State-wide Bird Count conducted on May 2. A total of 90 observers covering 1,246 miles through all eight Maryland Eastern Shore counties observed only 22 bluebirds. No bluebirds whatever were found in four of the eight counties. (See Maryland Birdlife 26: 39-51.)

Scarcity of natural cavities and overwhelming competition from Starlings and House Sparrows for the cavities that do exist appear to be major reasons for the decline in the bluebird population. There is good evidence that a bluebird population can be restored within a few years in suitable rural and far-outlying suburban areas by supplying sufficient numbers of Starling-proof bluebird nesting boxes and exerting constant vigilance, where necessary, to prevent House Sparrows from using the boxes. Unless this is done, and if the Starling population continues to spread to rural areas at its present rapid rate, the Eastern Bluebird may suffer the fate of the Passenger Pigeon within the foreseeable future.

All MOS Chapters are again urged to participate in this project during 1971. For best results bluebird nesting boxes should be set out by March 1, although bluebirds usually do not start to nest before April 1 and late broods are sometimes started as late as the last week of July. All previously installed nesting boxes should be inspected, cleaned, and repaired if necessary by March 1. Instructions for building, mounting, and selecting proper locations for bluebird nesting boxes may be found in the December 1969 issue of Maryland Birdlife (25: 138-142). Participating chapters are requested to report their results to the writer by October 1, if possible. The writer will also be glad to supply further information or assistance on request.

4312 Van Buren St., University Park, Hyattsville

## MOS RECEIVES OUTDOOR WRITERS ASSOCIATION'S CONSERVATION AWARD

The Mason-Dixon Outdoor Writers Association, at its annual meeting in Easton on February 22, presented its first conservation award to the Maryland Ornithological Society. Mr. Bob Gooch, awards program chairman, credited MOS with "a truly remarkable job of putting together what is probably the largest private network of sanctuaries ever created in Maryland." The award was accepted by President Unger.

## WINTER BIRD SURVEY OF CENTRAL MARYLAND

*Chandler S. Robbins*

## INTRODUCTION

In January and February of 1970 and 1971, members of the Maryland Ornithological Society and the Delmarva Ornithological Society participated in a pilot study designed to measure year-to-year changes in winter bird populations. This study is part of an international effort to standardize counting techniques and develop a system that can be adopted on a world-wide basis for monitoring changes in bird populations. Maryland's part in the 1970 program was summarized in the March 1970 issue of Maryland Birdlife (26: 11-20).

## LOCATION

The area used in this study (Fig. 1) stretches from Chesapeake Bay west to the base of Catoclin Mountain ( $76^{\circ} 22' 1/2''$  to  $77^{\circ} 30'$  W) and extends from just north of Washington, D. C. northward to include Frederick and Towson ( $39^{\circ} 00'$  to  $39^{\circ} 30'$  N). An additional five routes were added at the northeast to include the rest of Baltimore County. Elevations ranged from sea level to 880 feet. The mean elevation of the nine coastal plain routes was 75 feet and the mean elevation of the 32 piedmont routes was 460 feet.

## METHODS

One Winter Bird Survey route was established at the center of each  $7\frac{1}{2}$ -minute block of latitude and longitude (Fig. 1). Topographic maps of these blocks were used for plotting the individual routes. Each route passed through the "key point," which was defined as the exact center of the map. Each route consisted of a closed 5-mile course in the approxi-

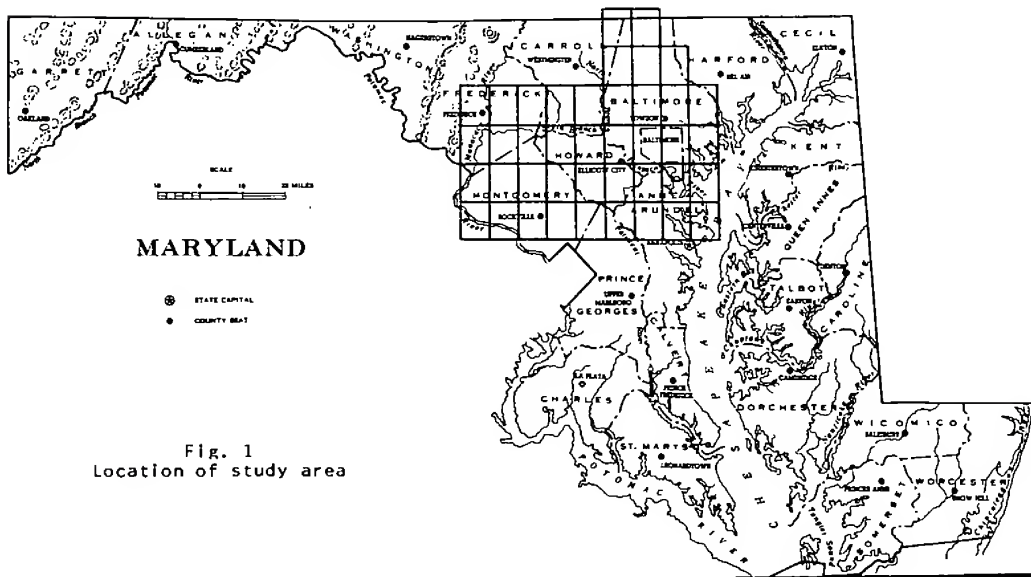


Fig. 1  
Location of study area

mate shape of a square with the "key point" lying at the center of the south line of the square. The observer selected a convenient starting point and mapped his exact course through the area. The course of a route was adjusted when necessary to make it easier to follow in subsequent years and to facilitate crossing larger streams on road bridges.

Each route was covered once on foot by one observer (or two working together) during the period January 15 through February 15. Coverage began at official sunrise and the observers adjusted their walking rate so as to finish in exactly four hours. All birds identified by sight or sound were counted and recorded by hourly periods. Birds that were more than one-quarter mile from the observer were recorded separately.

#### COVERAGE

A previous summary for 1970 was based on reports from 38 of the 41 routes. Reports from two other routes, received after the summary was prepared, have been added to the 1970 data. The present summary for 1971 is based on reports from 38 routes, 37 of which were run in both years. All but four routes were covered by the same principal observer in both years.

#### WEATHER

Weather is always a problem on winter bird counts. In 1970 several counts were taken during a snow storm on the last week end of the count period. In 1971, snow cover and very windy weather during the latter half of January resulted in most counts being postponed until February; but the last two week ends of February were very favorable for bird counting.

It was noted last year that counts made during light snow were comparable with those made under more favorable weather conditions, except for the absence of Turkey Vultures and lower counts of hawks and crows. Although not nearly as many of the 1971 counts were taken while snow was falling, many more were taken on days with low temperatures. The effect of weather conditions on counts of various species has not yet been fully explored. Thus far, the only strong correlation noted is a decrease in birds counted on windy days.

#### SPECIES

The number of species recorded on 40 routes in 1970 was 84, and the same total was reported from 38 routes in 1971. Species counts ranged from 17 to 43 per route in 1970 and from 19 to 40 in 1971. The mean number of species per route was 28 in 1970 and 29 in 1971.

In 1970 only the Common Crow, Starling and Cardinal were found on all Maryland routes. In 1971 these three plus the Downy Woodpecker, House Sparrow and Song Sparrow were found on all routes. The Blue Jay, Mockingbird, Slate-colored Junco and White-throated Sparrow were found on all but one of the 1971 routes.



The following species were reported from only one route in Maryland in 1971: Pintail, Green-winged Teal, American Widgeon, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, American Coot, Common Snipe, Great Horned Owl, Saw-whet Owl (road kill), Water Pipit, Loggerhead Shrike, Pine Warbler, Rusty Blackbird, Pine Siskin and Vesper Sparrow.

Species found in 1970 but not in 1971 were: Oldsquaw, Ruddy Duck, Cooper's Hawk, Virginia Rail, Barred Owl, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Evening Grosbeak, Common Redpoll, Red Crossbill and White-winged Crossbill. Species found in 1971 but not in 1970 were: Wood Duck, American Coot, Great Horned Owl, Saw-whet Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Water Pipit, Pine Warbler, Vesper Sparrow and Fox Sparrow.

#### ABUNDANCE

The great variation between years in counts of many of the more common species presents difficult problems in interpretation. Do they represent actual population changes or are they merely artifacts of the sampling system (sampling error)? We have examples of sampling error in the uneven distribution of large flocks of blackbirds. Early migratory movement of Robins obscured any change in wintering population that might have occurred. Single concentrations of Downy Woodpeckers or Tree Sparrows in favorable feeding areas made route-to-route variability so high that population changes could not be detected.

In 1970 the ten commonest species (based on all 40 routes) were the Starling, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Crow, House Sparrow, Slate-colored Junco, Tree Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Cardinal, Brown-headed Cowbird and Rock Dove, in that sequence. In 1971 the ten commonest were the Starling, Common Grackle, Common Crow, House Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Slate-colored Junco, Blue Jay, Cardinal, Mourning Dove and Robin. Note that only six species are common to both lists.

Separate averages (means) were computed for the 1971 piedmont and coastal plain routes. The means for 45 species were compared with mean birds per 4 party-hours from four Christmas Bird Counts within the study area (Table 1). A similar summary for 1970 was presented in Maryland Birdlife (26: 19). Piedmont counts for both years were consistently higher than coastal plain counts for the Mourning Dove, Blue Jay, Common Crow and Tree Sparrow, while the coastal plain counts were higher for the Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren and Robin.

The Winter Bird Survey yielded consistently higher totals than the Christmas Bird Count for the Red-bellied Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Common Crow, Carolina Wren and Starling; the Christmas Bird Count had more Mockingbirds, Myrtle Warblers, House Finches and Rufous-sided Towhees. The advantage of the Winter Bird Survey over the Christmas Bird Count is that results can be more readily analyzed by statistical methods; the routes are systematically distributed and more uniform procedures are followed.

Table 1. Comparison of Christmas Bird Count and Winter Bird Survey, 1971

Species	Birds per 4 party-hours			
	Piedmont		Coastal Plain	
	WBS	CBC	WBS	CBC
Turkey Vulture	2.38	4.59	0.00	4.47
Bobwhite	4.69	3.02	5.38	8.70
Mourning Dove	25.34	10.79	2.62	5.32
Yellow-shafted Flicker	2.14	1.84	3.12	2.87
Red-bellied Woodpecker	6.38	2.42	7.88	4.27
Hairy Woodpecker	0.76	0.50	2.00	0.66
Downy Woodpecker	6.10	4.52	6.50	4.58
Blue Jay	27.66	13.64	26.25	13.59
Common Crow	73.90	17.18	25.25	13.63
Black-capped Chickadee	0.69	0.12	0.00	0.12
Carolina Chickadee	11.90	11.69	18.75	20.00
Tufted Titmouse	11.03	7.19	13.00	8.93
White-breasted Nuthatch	2.66	1.80	1.50	1.86
Red-breasted Nuthatch	0.00	0.12	0.00	0.12
Brown Creeper	0.83	1.11	2.88	1.09
Winter Wren	0.14	0.33	1.50	0.16
Carolina Wren	3.34	2.41	9.38	3.53
Mockingbird	6.17	7.15	5.88	11.34
Robin	16.83	0.94	31.62	1.20
Eastern Bluebird	0.41	0.59	0.62	0.00
Golden-crowned Kinglet	0.93	1.47	3.88	0.50
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	0.00	0.47	0.00	0.12
Cedar Waxwing	4.45	1.73	4.88	1.28
Starling	166.83	139.95	167.62	101.28
Myrtle Warbler	0.17	1.36	0.12	1.13
House Sparrow	45.48	22.75	42.50	40.35
Eastern Meadowlark	9.83	3.01	0.00	7.92
Red-winged Blackbird	11.24	23.12	48.38	23.30
Common Grackle	162.90	191.98	10.62	4.35
Brown-headed Cowbird	18.10	57.32	26.75	3.46
Cardinal	22.45	21.89	20.12	33.09
Evening Grosbeak	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.16
Purple Finch	0.31	0.38	0.00	0.66
House Finch	0.00	3.31	0.00	1.09
Pine Siskin	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.04
American Goldfinch	12.14	6.03	1.62	13.75
Rufous-sided Towhee	0.59	1.04	2.25	4.12
Savannah Sparrow	0.28	0.18	0.00	0.27
Slate-colored Junco	29.66	38.26	32.62	30.06
Tree Sparrow	13.21	4.13	1.75	1.79
Field Sparrow	5.03	8.45	5.75	2.21
White-crowned Sparrow	1.21	0.47	0.00	0.54
White-throated Sparrow	35.17	29.00	25.62	28.50
Swamp Sparrow	0.45	0.96	1.50	0.19
Song Sparrow	19.38	11.91	19.88	9.71

Means for the piedmont and for the coastal plain, for 37 Winter Bird Survey routes covered in both 1970 and 1971, were combined to give a weighted mean for each year (weighted by the number of routes in each physiographic province). Weighted means for selected species, and the percent changes in these means from 1970 to 1971, are listed in Table 2. One is immediately struck by the tremendous percent changes in the means for many species.

The greatest increase was in Robins, which were twelve times as common on the 1971 Survey as they were in 1970. Plotting the 1971 Robin counts by date indicated that an early migration of this species arrived on February 7. The highest counts prior to that date were 19 birds on February 3, and 5 birds on February 6. On the 7th, however, counts ranged from 10 to 90 birds and the average from February 7 to the end of the period was approximately 50 Robins per count. Thus, in 1971 part of an early spring migration, rather than a mid-winter population, was sampled. The Robin was the only species in which migration was detected during the count period.

There were conspicuous increases (to more than double the 1970 means) in counts of the Red-bellied Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Cedar Waxwing, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Rufous-sided Towhee, Swamp Sparrow and Song Sparrow.

The northern finches were most noticeable in their decline. The Evening Grosbeak dropped from 124 individuals on 11 routes to no birds, the Common Redpoll from 12 individuals on 2 routes to none, the Pine Siskin from 35 birds on 3 routes to none, the Red Crossbill from 81 birds on 6 routes to none, and the White-winged Crossbill from 19 birds on 2 routes in 1970 to no birds in 1971. The Purple Finch also decreased, from 28 birds on 10 routes to 9 birds on 4 routes. There was also a decline of 50 percent or more in mean counts of Black-capped Chickadees, Red-winged Blackbirds and Tree Sparrows.

Counts for the more common species were subjected to an analysis of variance, and statistically significant differences were found between the 1970 and 1971 counts of 10 species (see Table 2).

It should be emphasized that this report concerns the relative abundance of birds in central Maryland only, and infers nothing about changes in total populations of the species.

The maps on page 37 show the changes in comparative abundance of the Blue Jay, Tree Sparrow and White-throated Sparrow from 1970 to 1971. There was an increase in the Blue Jay and White-throated Sparrow populations in central Maryland, and a possible drop in Tree Sparrow numbers.

#### HOURLY VARIATION

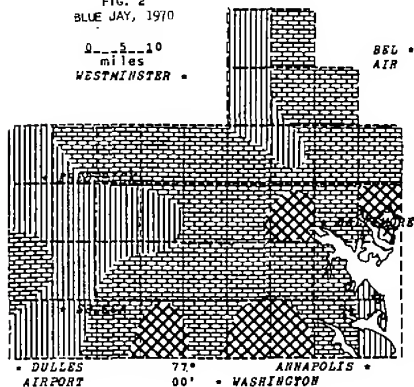
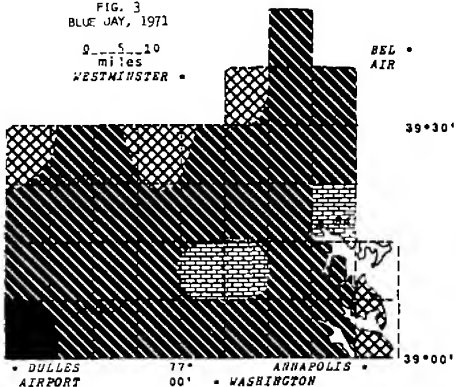
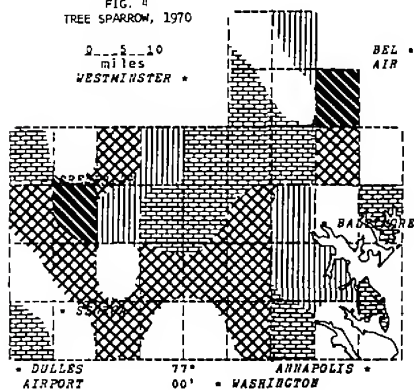
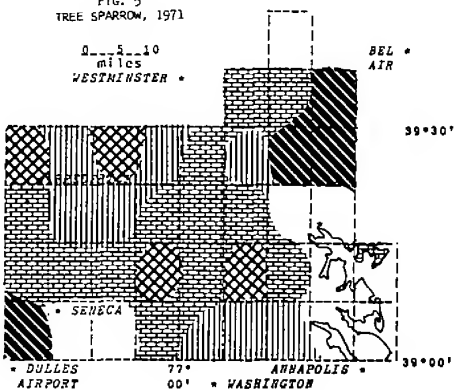
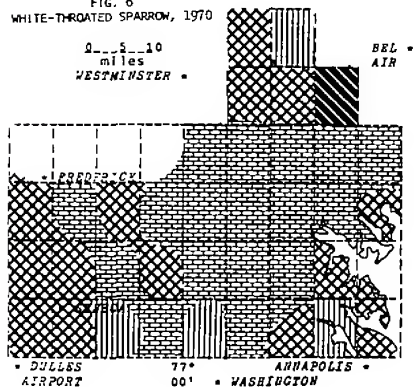
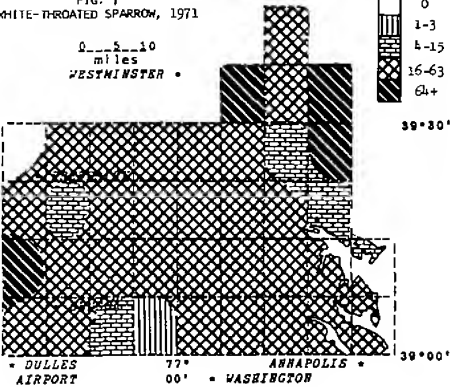
Now that two years' data are available, we may look for hourly trends in the conspicuousness of different species or different families. In particular, it is important to know the optimum time of day for

Table 2. Comparison of Weighted Means

<u>Species</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Turkey Vulture	1.75	1.94	+ 11%
Bobwhite	5.74	4.84	- 16
Mourning Dove	13.23	20.35	+ 54
Yellow-shafted Flicker	1.57	2.36	+ 50
**Red-bellied Woodpecker	2.95	6.71	+ 127
Hairy Woodpecker	0.84	1.03	+ 23
Downy Woodpecker	7.67	6.19	- 19
**Blue Jay	7.85	27.35	+ 248
Common Crow	56.32	63.22	+ 12
Black-capped Chickadee	4.99	0.54	- 89
Carolina Chickadee	11.98	13.40	+ 12
Tufted Titmouse	9.47	11.46	+ 21
White-breasted Nuthatch	2.14	2.41	+ 13
*Red-breasted Nuthatch	0.27	0.00	- 100
Brown Creeper	1.65	1.28	- 22
**Carolina Wren	3.36	4.67	+ 39
Mockingbird	5.48	6.11	+ 11
**Robin	1.66	20.08	+1110
Golden-crowned Kinglet	2.33	1.58	- 32
*Cedar Waxwing	0.48	4.54	+ 846
Starling	171.57	167.00	- 3
Myrtle Warbler	0.11	0.16	+ 45
House Sparrow	51.24	44.83	- 12
**Eastern Meadowlark	2.04	7.67	+ 276
Red-winged Blackbird	51.21	19.39	- 62
Common Grackle	26.45	129.47	+ 389
Brown-headed Cowbird	19.53	20.00	+ 2
Cardinal	17.32	21.94	+ 26
Evening Grosbeak	3.35	0.00	- 100
Purple Finch	0.75	0.24	- 68
Pine Siskin	0.94	0.02	- 98
American Goldfinch	6.61	9.83	+ 49
Red Crossbill	2.22	0.00	- 100
Rufous-sided Towhee	0.43	0.95	+ 121
Slate-colored Junco	31.87	30.31	- 5
Tree Sparrow	26.87	10.69	- 60
Field Sparrow	3.16	5.19	+ 64
*White-throated Sparrow	18.69	33.07	+ 77
*Swamp Sparrow	0.16	0.68	+ 325
**Song Sparrow	7.61	19.48	+ 156

\* significant at the 95% level of probability

\*\* significant at the 99% level of probability

FIG. 2  
BLUE JAY, 1970FIG. 3  
BLUE JAY, 1971FIG. 4  
TREE SPARROW, 1970FIG. 5  
TREE SPARROW, 1971FIG. 6  
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW, 1970FIG. 7  
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW, 1971

counting winter birds: the period with the highest and most consistent counts (the least variability).

Because an early morning flight of 4,500 Common Grackles on the Rockville route would dominate the total birds seen during the first hour, this species was excluded from the comparison. Considering all other species, 29 percent of the birds recorded were listed in the first hour after sunrise, 26 percent in the second hour, 23 percent in the third hour, and 22 percent in the fourth hour. The totals for the fourth hour are remarkably similar to those for the third hour, indicating no appreciable decline in bird activity or observer efficiency in the fourth hour.

All common species except the vultures, hawks, doves and sparrows followed the same general trend: a gradual decrease after a spurt of early morning activity. For woodpeckers, jays, chickadees and titmice, wrens and mockingbirds, and Cardinals, the percentages for each hour fell within four percentage points of the average for all species combined. Crows and Starlings were disproportionately high in the first hour, reflecting dispersal of birds from their roosts; doves and sparrows reached a peak in the second hour after sunrise; and hawks and vultures started with low counts in the first hour and gradually increased to a strong peak in the fourth hour. If counts had been terminated after the third hour, 35 percent of the hawks and 61 percent of the vultures would not have been recorded.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are pleased to acknowledge the help of the following observers without whose hearty cooperation this Survey would not have been possible:

Charles M. Buchanan, Edward S. Buckler, Danny R. Bystrak (3 routes), Mrs. Robert Cochran, Mrs. Richard D. Cole, Janice H. Cooper, Mr. and Mrs. Morrill B. Donald, Douglas L. Frost, Kay C. Ferris, Robert H. Hahn, Dr. and Mrs. Howard Hodge, David W. Holmes, Craig A. Jeschke, Gwilym S. Jones, Hank Kaestner (2), Steve Marshall, Taylor McLean (2), Albert McManus, W. Graham Metson, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Neal Moore, Dr. and Mrs. Harvey Mudd, Charles L. Mullican, Dr. J. Wm. Oberman, Albin M. Plant, Chandler S. Robbins (6), Marvin Rogul, Isaac C. Sanchez, Jim Shiflett, Dr. William N. Shirey, William L. Steinhart, John Symonds, Willet T. Van Velzen (3), Robert J. Werrlein, Prof. Harold Wierenga, Comdr. Edward P. Wilson, Paul W. Woodward, Dr. and Mrs. Elmer Worthley.

The maps were prepared by Danny Bystrak of the Migratory Bird Populations Station.

Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife  
Migratory Bird Populations Station, Laurel



## BARROW'S GOLDENEYE SEEN AT OCEAN CITY, MARYLAND

Carl W. Carlson

On April 10, 1971, Paul DuMont and I met Kevin Mullen and James Schlefinger at Ocean City Inlet at about 8:30 a.m. A high surf was running in, seeming to indicate heavy off-sea winds during the night; but now a strong northwest wind was blowing the tops off the waves. The sky was clear.

We began scoping the water to check out the many loons. Near the end of the outer jetty I noticed a small dark duck and called the others, thinking it might be a Harlequin. The bird was drifting slowly shoreward about 20 feet beyond the jetty. Light was unfavorable and we had the bird only in silhouette, but could tell it was probably a goldeneye.

After it passed before us, so that we and the sun were both to the east of it, we could see that it was an unaccompanied female goldeneye. In the better light, the bill seemed unusually yellow, so we kept watching. At intervals, the bird would move or preen and hold its bill "just right" in the sunlight and we could then see plainly that the bill was yellow from tip to base. We continued watching until it drifted shoreward and in beside the jetty and thus out of view. During the watch, Dr. and Mrs. Harvey Mudd joined us.

We compared the bird to all the field guides, including both European and Western Petersons, and the European Bruun, and found that our bird met all tests for the female Barrow's Goldeneye (*Glaucionetta islandica*).

Later DuMont and I worked north to Henlopen and returned to the jetty about 4:30 p.m. where we found Mullen and Schlefinger. We soon found "our duck" beyond the jetty, and watched as it moved east, passing before us, and continuing seaward to provide much better, closer views in better light. Also, the water was smoother and focusing far less difficult. We kept the bird in view for nearly an hour under these favorable conditions, and once, by good luck, I had a perfectly focussed view by 60X eyepiece of the bill, and can say positively that it was yellow from tip to base. Again, we agreed that it was indeed a Barrow's. The others then left, but soon Mr. and Mrs. Edward Buckler arrived in time to see the bird briefly before it drifted out to sea and was lost in the surf.

The bird was indisputably a goldeneye, and by reason of bill color, a female. The head was rich dark brown, the color evident in contrast to the back. The "golden eye" was remarkably distinct and visible in the dark face. The forehead was definitely "perpendicular," and the very small bill seemed to form a right angle with it. The lower rear of the head had a definite fullness to the feathering, so that the rear profile curved slightly outward at the base of the head, rather than in toward the nape. The back was blackish-gray of various shades. The

flank had the usual white mark. The breast was light gray, going into white which continued down to the underparts.

On the basis of these observations for periods totaling well over an hour, we agreed that the bird was a female Barrow's Goldeneye.

This winter has given us the best sea birding we have had in some years along the Maryland-Delaware coast. Since last August, of all our rare and irregular winter species, only the Harlequin Duck has not been reported. We have had Glaucous, Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, Little and Black-headed Gulls, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Razorbill, Dovekies, Red-necked and Eared Grebes, and both species of eider. Apparently something has pushed these species south farther and/or in unusual numbers, and so this winter even a Barrow's Goldeneye is not as great a surprise as it normally would be.

The Barrow's Goldeneye has been carried on the Hypothetical list of Maryland birds on the basis of a specimen said to have been taken about December 20, 1922 at the mouth of the Bush River in Baltimore County; but the specimen, if ever preserved, has never been examined by an ornithologist, and cannot now be found. This species winters regularly south to Long Island, and should be carefully looked for in tidewater Maryland. A good photograph or a preserved specimen would add the Barrow's Goldeneye to the official Maryland list.

5706 Lone Oak Drive, Bethesda

## FALL SIGHTING OF NORTHERN PHALAROPE IN TALBOT COUNTY

*Dickson J. Preston*

On the morning of Saturday, October 17, 1970, Dr. Shepard Krech, Jr., took a stroll to the fresh water pond on his farm near the Wye River in northwestern Talbot County.

There he spotted three birds he thought he had seen before—but far from the inland plain of the Maryland Eastern Shore. Hurrying home, he telephoned a friend, T. Hughlett Henry, Jr., whom he knew to be an enthusiastic birder of long standing.

Within an hour, Henry, with his wife and Donald S. Ross, also MOS members, arrived to confirm Dr. Krech's identification. The birds were Northern Phalaropes (*Lobipes lobatus*), often seen at sea and in migration on the northern plains, but previously unknown to Talbot County. Dr. Krech had become familiar with them on their breeding grounds in Canada's Northwest Territories.

The sighting provides the first fall record for the Eastern Shore away from the immediate vicinity of the coast. There had been six earlier inland autumn records for Maryland, all of them west of Chesapeake Bay.

For the next three days, the phalaropes were observed closely by numerous people, among them V. Edwin Unger, Richard Kleen, Robert Sharp II, and the writer. Two birds were still present on Sunday, October 18, but only one was seen on Monday. No sightings were reported after October 19.

Even along the Atlantic Coast, the Northern Phalarope is listed as a rare fall transient. It is seldom seen from land south of New Jersey, and then primarily after storms. Its breeding grounds are circumpolar, ranging from the Arctic Ocean south to Labrador and the upper Yukon Valley in Canada and to the British Isles and central Russia in Europe. It winters at sea.

R. F. D. 4, Box 233, Easton



Northern Phalarope in Talbot County

Photo by the author

## CARL B. LUBBERT

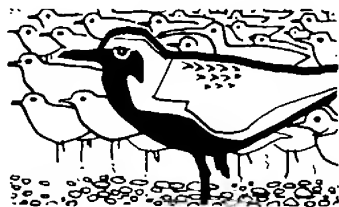
M. O. S. deeply regrets to report the loss of a life member, from the Baltimore Chapter, Carl B. Lubbert, on January 16, 1971.

Mr. Lubbert traveled extensively and was generous in sharing his filmed memories of his trips with our Chapters, having given programs at Allegany, Baltimore, Frederick and Harford Chapters.

He took an active part in the M. O. S. Sanctuary program, starting with the early days of Rock Run, and continuing through this last fall at Irish Grove. In his quiet way he worked 'behind the scenes' finding chores that needed attention, and he used his ingenuity to make our Sanctuary buildings and grounds more hospitable. He was also a licensed bird bander and gave demonstrations at Cyburn.

We extend our sincere sympathy to Mrs. Erana Lubbert and hope she will continue to carry on the birding activities they had so much enjoyed doing together.

G. H. C.



## THE SEASON

OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 1970

*Chandler S. Robbins*

Marylanders were blessed with a warm autumn in 1970. Weekly mean temperatures remained consistently above normal from the beginning of October until Christmas eve. This warm trend also prevailed over most of the northeastern United States. As a result, many birds remained later than usual and, despite the lack of northern finches, birds were present in excellent variety into the Christmas Count period.

The earliest fall arrival dates for the October through December period are shown by counties in Table 1, and the latest fall departure dates are listed in Table 2. I wish to thank the observers, banders and field trip leaders who supplied the thousands of records that are summarized in these tables. While it is not practical to acknowledge all the observers individually, we are pleased to list here the names of those members who submitted the great majority of the reports for this period: Allegany County--James Paulus, Kendrick Y. Hodgdon; Frederick County--Dr. John W. Richards; Baltimore City and County--Mr. and Mrs. Walter Bohanan, Mrs. Frances Pope, Mrs. Robert E. Kaestner, Hank Kaestner, Mrs. Joshua W. Rowe; Howard--Mrs. Harry Rauth, Morris R. Collins,

Table 1. Earliest Fall Dates for Late Arriving Species, 1970

Species	Alle	Fred	Balt	Howd	Mont	Pr.G	Anne	Calv	Kent	Caro	Talb	Somr
Whistling Swan	0	0	11/17	11/15	11/16	11/16	--	11/ 8	10/17	11/16	9/12	--
Green-winged Teal	9/27	0	0	--	--	9/14	--	0	11/12	11/18	--	8/16
Ring-necked Duck	11/ 5	0	11/ 2	0	--	10/12	0	0	--	0	0	0
Bufflehead	11/ 5	11/ 6	10/28	12/16	--	11/ 5	11/ 7	10/24	--	0	--	--
Oldsquaw	0	12/14	10/27	0	11/16	0	10/25	0	--	0	--	--
White-winged Scoter	0	0	11/13	0	0	0	12/27	0	11/12	0	--	--
Ruddy Duck	0	11/ 6	10/28	0	0	10/12	--	0	10/ 5	0	--	--
Rough-legged Hawk	10/25	1/ 2	0	--	1/ 3	0	0	12/24	1/ 3	10/16	0	12/30
Am. Coot	10/22	0	11/15	0	10/11	10/ 5	--	0	9/17	--	--	--
White-breasted Nuthatch	--	--	9/11	10/12	--	--	10/ 5	11/17	--	11/ 6	--	--
Hermit Thrush	10/29	10/20	10/16	10/ 8	10/14	--	--	--	--	11/14	10/17	10/ 4
Eastern Bluebird	--	10/24	10/20	--	--	10/ 7	--	10/ 6	11/ 5	--	9/22	--
Water Pipit	0	9/13	11/ 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	11/ 7	11/ 1	--
Rusty Blackbird	10/22	--	10/ 6	0	--	9/28	--	10/ 8	11/ 6	9/18	10/17	--
Evening Grosbeak	12/ 1	0	0	11/30	0	--	11/16	12/24	0	12/26	0	0
Purple Finch	10/23	0	11/ 2	11/11	11/16	--	--	12/ 3	10/17	10/19	10/17	--
House Finch	0	0	11/19	11/ 6	10/28	--	12/27	0	--	11/13	--	10/24
Rufous-sided Towhee	--	--	10/ 5	--	--	--	--	10/10	9/20	--	--	10/ 6
Tree Sparrow	11/18	11/ 8	11/17	11/19	11/15	11/24	--	12/25	--	12/25	0	--
White-crowned Sparrow	11/ 8	--	10/20	10/ 3	10/11	0	0	0	--	10/22	10/18	10/10
Fox Sparrow	11/11	--	10/28	11/12	10/20	10/29	--	--	10/28	11/17	--	--

Mrs. G. C. Munro, Bill Murphy, Ted Van Velzen; Montgomery--Chris G. Petrow, Paul W. Woodward, Dr. Fred Evenden, Dr. Robert L. Pyle, George Hurley, Robert W. Warfield; Prince Georges--Frank McGilvrey, John H. Fales, Chandler S. Robbins; Anne Arundel--Danny Bystrak, Prof. Harold Wierenga, Prof. and Mrs. David Howard, Dr. Lawrence Murphy, Carl W. Carlson; Calvert--John H. Fales, Chandler and Eleanor Robbins; Kent--Mr. and Mrs. Edward Mendenhall, Edward F. Folsom; Caroline--Marvin W. Hewitt, Mrs. A. J. Fletcher, Alicia Knotts, Ethel Engle, V. Edwin Unger; Talbot--Jan Reese, Don Meritt; Somerset--Mrs. Richard D. Cole, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Lubbert, Harry T. Armistead, Chandler S. Robbins; Worcester--Mr. and Mrs. Chris Slaughter, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Ireby, Robert W. Warfield, Mr. and Mrs. Herman Kuch.

Loons and Grebes. During a hawk watch at Monument Knob in Washington Monument State Park on Nov. 7, Dr. John Richards observed 5 migrating Common Loons. Although loons must pass over South Mountain regularly during fall migration they are only rarely observed. Professor Harold Wierenga remarked that a Red-throated Loon he saw at Sandy Point from Nov. 16 to Dec. 11 (3 on Nov. 17) was only his second sighting of the species there in more than 25 years. Jeff Effinger saw an early Red-throat at Assateague Is. on Oct. 4. The Ocean City Christmas Count tally of 150 Red-throated Loons on Dec. 29 is the second highest midwinter record for Maryland. On Nov. 22, Harry Armistead counted 47 Pied-billed Grebes at Deal Island Wildlife Management Area, setting a new high for Somerset County.

Hérons, Egrets and Ibis. As the Cattle Egret continues to increase in numbers, it is only to be expected that it will be found on later and later dates in the fall. The following are record-breaking dates for these counties: Oct. 15 at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Prince Georges County (Glen Smart), Oct. 27 (4 birds) at Lusby in Calvert County (Chuck Rawls), Nov. 21 at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Dorchester County (Armistead), and Nov. 30 at Goldsboro in Caroline County (Marvin Hewitt). Other notable late departures were single Louisiana Herons at Blackwater on Oct. 31 (county record, Armistead) and in Somerset County on Nov. 11 (county record, Samuel H. Dyke); Glossy Ibis at Deal Island on Nov. 22 (state record, Armistead); and Green Herons at Oxford on Dec. 14 (John Wanuga) and on the Rock Run Christmas Count on Dec. 26. The mild fall doubtless played a part in the late departures cited above, and in unusually high wintering numbers of several heron species: 165 Great Blue Herons (previous high, 96) on the Ocean City Christmas Count and 67 (previous high, 39) on the Crisfield count, and 8 Common Egrets on the Southern Dorchester County count.

Swans and Geese. The peak influx of Whistling Swans took place on Nov. 16, with flights concentrated along or to the northwest of Chesapeake Bay. Four very early birds had been seen and heard calling in Talbot County on Sept. 12 (John Valliant). The westernmost Maryland sighting was at Sycamore Landing in Montgomery County, Nov. 16 (Dr. A. D. Geis). Canada Geese put on a great show at Irish Grove Sanctuary, Oct. 17-24. Thousands descended upon the nearby fields, and flocks were constantly flying over the Sanctuary at treetop level as they commuted from

Table 2. Latest Fall Departure Dates, 1970

Species	Latest				Alle	Fred	Balt	Howd	Mont	Pr.G	Anne	Calv	Kent	Caro	Talb	Somr	Worc
	1967	1968	1969	1970													
Green Heron	10/15	11/11	10/19	12/14	10/27	10/3	--	9/20	9/27	--	--	--	--	--	12/14	--	--
Cattle Egret	10/21	12/5	11/16	11/30	0	0	0	0	0	10/15	0	10/27	0	11/30	0	--	10/18
Common Egret	10/14	11/24	10/31	11/22	0	--	0	9/1	0	8/19	0	9/9	0	10/5	--	11/22	10/18
Canada Goose	12/30	12/21	11/22	11/22	0	0	11/15	10/28	11/2	10/19	W	W	W	--	W	11/22	W
Blue-winged Teal		10/4	11/22		10/22	10/3	9/22	0	11/8	--	--	--	0	0	0	11/22	--
Wood Duck			12/27	12/1	12/1	10/3	11/8	--	--	--	--	--	--	12/30	--	--	--
Broad-winged Hawk	10/22	10/27	10/12	10/6	9/30	10/3	9/20	--	--	9/19	--	8/28	0	0	10/2	0	10/6
Osprey	10/21	11/8	10/29	10/26	0	10/3	9/26	0	10/12	0	10/6	10/8	--	10/16	12/24	--	10/6
Am. Golden Plover				11/8	0	10/3	9/27	0	11/8	0	11/4	0	0	0	0	11/3	11/7
Am. Woodcock	11/26		12/7	12/15	11/30	10/14	10/21	9/20	--	--	--	--	12/15	--	--	W	W
Spotted Sandpiper	12/18	9/29	10/26	11/18	9/12	--	11/18	9/9	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	9/9	10/4
Solitary Sandpiper				10/6	9/24	10/1	--	9/9	10/6	0	0	--	0	--	0	9/8	0
Greater Yellowlegs	11/1	11/9	11/23	11/22	9/27	0	11/18	0	10/23	0	0	0	0	10/23	--	11/22	--
Lesser Yellowlegs	11/22	11/9	10/18	11/15	9/27	0	11/15	9/17	10/5	0	0	0	0	10/23	--	--	10/18
Pectoral Sandpiper		11/8	10/25		9/27	--	10/5	9/20	10/25	0	0	0	0	10/19	0	--	0
Least Sandpiper			9/28	10/4	9/27	--	9/15	9/20	0	0	0	--	0	8/12	8/24	--	10/4
Semipalmated Sandpiper				10/5	9/8	0	10/5	0	0	0	0	0	0	8/17	9/3	--	10/4
Laughing Gull	11/13	11/9	11/2	11/21	0	0	0	0	0	0	11/21	10/10	--	0	10/3	--	10/18
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	10/12	11/3	10/17	10/28	10/23	10/22	10/8	10/4	10/23	--	10/12	10/10	10/28	10/3	9/13	--	--
Common Nighthawk	10/4	10/1	10/3	10/12	8/25	--	10/12	9/25	8/27	9/14	--	10/8	0	--	9/2	0	0
Chimney Swift	10/8	10/20	10/13	10/15	10/2	10/15	10/14	10/12	10/10	10/9	10/12	10/7	--	10/6	--	--	--
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	10/14	9/27	10/6	10/7	10/2	9/27	9/30	10/7	9/27	9/13	--	9/6	9/18	10/6	10/1	9/8	--
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	11/21	10/31	11/22	10/29	--	11/29	10/15	10/20	W	W	10/24	10/25	10/29	W	W	10/5	W
Eastern Kingbird	9/19	9/27	9/22	9/13	8/25	--	--	9/4	9/5	8/25	9/3	9/7	--	9/13	9/13	9/8	--
Great Crested Flycatcher	10/6	9/19	10/1	9/29	--	9/17	--	9/5	--	--	--	--	--	9/6	9/20	9/13	9/29
Eastern Phoebe	11/29	12/6	10/28	12/1	12/1	--	10/23	10/26	11/5	10/9	--	10/28	--	10/19	10/3	11/22	--
Eastern Wood Pewee	10/27	10/14	10/5	10/17	10/2	9/27	9/26	10/17	9/24	--	10/3	--	--	9/30	9/29	10/5	10/6
Tree Swallow	11/2	11/9	10/30	11/22	9/30	10/3	--	0	10/4	9/16	--	10/17	--	10/2	10/3	11/22	11/21
Barn Swallow	9/17	10/4	10/12	9/29	9/1	--	--	--	--	9/10	--	9/16	--	--	9/22	--	9/29
Purple Martin	9/14	9/4	9/9	9/7	--	--	--	--	--	8/24	--	9/7	9/2	--	8/8	8/18	--
Blue Jay	11/6	10/30	10/28	10/29	W	W	W	W	10/29	10/26	W	10/20	W	W	W	10/26	10/6
House Wren	10/25	11/9	11/15	11/7	10/2	10/13	11/4	10/12	11/7	10/5	--	--	10/25	10/6	10/3	10/19	10/6
Catbird	12/2	11/29	11/22	11/26	10/22	11/8	10/28	10/15	10/20	9/18	10/12	11/26	11/2	11/26	10/18	10/20	10/18
Brown Thrasher	12/2	12/5	11/27	11/27	10/30	11/27	10/20	10/31	11/9	9/24	10/3	11/26	10/22	--	10/17	10/25	10/18
Wood Thrush	10/29	10/31	10/31	10/18	9/14	10/1	10/18	10/11	10/9	--	10/13	10/8	10/16	10/15	10/3	10/17	10/6
Hermit Thrush	11/16	11/30	11/25	11/22	11/2	--	11/8	10/25	10/30	--	--	--	11/19	11/14	10/18	11/22	10/18
Swainson's Thrush	10/27	12/1	10/19	10/22	0	10/13	10/6	10/7	10/18	10/13	10/8	--	10/22	10/1	10/2	10/11	10/6
Gray-cheeked Thrush	10/26	10/30	10/15	10/14	0	9/30	9/27	10/3	10/13	10/12	10/12	10/10	10/14	9/30	10/2	10/12	10/6
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	10/1	10/26	9/27	10/4	10/4	--	--	9/10	9/12	--	--	--	9/2	--	--	9/11	--
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	11/29	11/21	11/27	12/17	11/4	12/17	12/6	11/1	11/15	12/5	W	12/3	12/13	11/1	W	11/22	W
Water Pipit			12/12		0	--	11/1	0	11/17	12/12	11/17	0	0	0	11/1	W	W
Cedar Waxwing	12/9	11/9	12/9	12/31	11/22	12/25	11/25	--	11/8	12/15	W	12/3	11/19	12/31	11/25	W	W



Species	Latest				Alle	Fred	Balt	Howd	Mont	Pr.G	Anne	Calv	Kent	Caro	Talb	Somr	Worc
	1967	1968	1969	1970													
White-eyed Vireo	10/21	10/ 9	10/11	10/10	0	0	9/27	9/21	9/28	--	9/19	9/13	9/18	--	--	10/10	--
Yellow-throated Vireo				10/ 4	9/14	--	--	9/13	10/ 4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Solitary Vireo	10/27	10/29	11/ 2	10/26	0	10/13	11/ 8	10/11	10/25	0	10/25	0	10/26	--	0	10/13	10/ 5
Red-eyed Vireo	10/27	10/26	10/19	10/ 7	9/29	9/21	9/27	10/ 4	9/27	--	10/ 3	10/ 7	10/ 6	10/ 1	10/ 1	10/ 5	10/ 6
Philadelphia Vireo	10/ 7	9/30	11/ 9	10/13	0	10/13	10/ 3	0	0	0	0	0	9/18	0	0	0	10/ 6
Warbling Vireo				9/12	9/12	--	0	0	0	0	0	8/ 2	9/10	0	0	0	0
Black-and-white Warbler	10/22	10/21	10/17	10/25	--	10/13	10/16	9/28	9/27	--	10/13	--	10/25	10/ 1	10/ 1	10/ 2	10/ 6
Tennessee Warbler	10/22	10/31	10/19	10/31	--	10/13	0	--	9/27	0	10/12	0	10/31	0	9/20	0	0
Nashville Warbler	10/31	11/ 2	12/16	10/31	--	10/13	9/27	--	10/18	0	10/31	0	10/26	10/ 1	9/20	0	9/29
Parula Warbler	10/27	10/26	10/14	10/20	--	10/13	9/27	10/20	9/27	--	10/12	--	9/30	--	9/20	9/20	10/ 6
Magnolia Warbler	10/22	10/21	10/12	10/16	--	10/13	10/16	9/28	10/ 1	--	10/12	10/11	10/16	10/ 1	10/ 1	10/ 4	10/ 6
Cape May Warbler	10/29	10/29	10/19	10/30	9/30	0	9/27	9/27	9/27	--	10/ 9	10/ 1	10/15	10/ 6	--	10/30	10/ 6
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	10/31	10/24	10/28	10/19	10/ 2	10/13	10/10	10/12	9/12	0	10/13	10/ 7	10/19	10/ 1	10/ 1	10/19	10/ 6
Myrtle Warbler	12/ 2	11/28	11/23	12/16	12/29	12/25	11/13	11/ 3	11/ 8	11/16	11/ 8	11/ 8	12/16	W	W	11/22	W
Black-thr. Green Warbler	10/22	10/23	11/ 2	10/19	--	10/14	10/ 8	10/13	9/27	0	10/13	10/10	10/19	0	9/20	0	10/ 6
Blackburnian Warbler	10/ 7	10/ 8	10/ 4	10/ 6	--	--	9/27	10/ 3	9/27	0	10/ 6	9/13	0	--	0	0	--
Chestnut-sided Warbler	10/12	10/ 6	10/ 5	10/ 8	--	--	9/27	10/ 4	0	0	10/ 8	0	10/ 1	0	0	0	9/29
Bay-breasted Warbler	10/14	10/23	11/28	10/ 8	10/ 1	0	9/27	--	--	0	10/ 8	0	10/ 8	10/ 1	0	9/12	--
Blackpoll Warbler	10/27	10/27	10/15	10/16	0	10/13	9/27	9/27	9/27	0	10/12	10/10	10/16	0	9/20	0	9/29
Pine Warbler				10/11	10/ 2	--	0	9/ 1	9/27	9/25	--	10/11	--	9/30	--	10/ 6	10/ 6
Prairie Warbler	10/ 8	10/22	10/ 9	9/29	--	--	--	9/10	--	--	--	--	--	9/20	9/13	9/20	9/29
Palm Warbler	11/ 2	11/ 2	11/ 1	11/28	0	0	11/ 8	10/18	11/ 1	0	0	0	10/28	11/28	--	11/22	10/18
Ovenbird	10/27	10/31	10/29	10/23	10/23	--	10/ 6	10/11	10/ 2	10/16	10/ 3	9/12	10/16	10/ 2	9/29	10/16	10/ 6
Northern Waterthrush	10/21	10/13	10/18	11/27	9/10	0	9/27	--	11/27	--	10/12	0	10/18	10/ 2	9/29	10/18	10/ 6
Kentucky Warbler	9/18	9/15	9/19	9/27	9/ 1	--	9/27	9/ 6	9/ 5	--	--	8/16	0	9/20	--	--	--
Connecticut Warbler	10/ 9	10/ 8	10/15	11/ 7	0	9/13	9/27	0	11/ 7	9/11	0	10/ 1	0	9/29	9/20	0	--
Yellowthroat	10/23	10/26	10/29	10/29	10/14	9/17	10/10	10/22	10/29	9/17	10/22	10/ 7	10/28	10/ 1	10/ 2	10/24	--
Yellow-breasted Chat	10/27	11/ 1	10/27	10/28	10/ 6	--	9/27	9/22	10/ 1	--	--	10/ 1	10/28	--	10/18	9/12	--
Wilson's Warbler	10/ 6	10/ 9	10/ 5	10/15	10/ 2	9/30	9/27	10/ 3	9/15	--	0	0	10/15	9/25	10/ 1	10/ 1	9/29
Canada Warbler	10/ 7	9/29	10/ 4	10/29	0	--	--	9/27	9/ 9	--	0	0	10/29	0	9/ 7	0	10/ 6
American Redstart	10/29	10/23	10/27	10/18	9/14	10/13	10/11	9/28	9/27	9/18	10/12	9/13	10/16	10/ 2	10/18	10/ 5	10/ 6
Bobolink	10/ 6	10/ 2	10/26	10/ 6	0	--	0	0	10/ 6	--	--	10/ 1	0	--	10/ 2	--	0
Orchard Oriole	9/ 7	9/30	9/ 8	9/11	8/17	--	--	8/26	--	--	--	7/11	9/ 1	9/11	--	--	--
Baltimore Oriole	11/17	11/29	11/29	10/ 6	9/ 1	--	--	9/27	9/22	--	10/ 3	8/25	9/17	9/13	9/27	9/12	10/ 6
Scarlet Tanager	10/23	11/23	11/ 2	10/13	9/30	10/13	10/ 6	10/12	10/11	--	--	--	10/13	9/22	9/30	10/ 4	10/ 6
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	10/13	11/12	10/24	10/13	10/ 6	10/12	10/11	10/ 7	10/ 8	0	--	0	10/ 8	10/13	10/ 1	9/20	10/ 5
Blue Grosbeak	10/28	10/12	9/24	10/ 7	0	0	--	--	--	8/25	--	8/26	--	10/ 7	10/ 1	10/ 2	--
Indigo Bunting	10/30	10/25	10/19	10/16	10/14	10/ 3	--	10/ 4	10/ 8	9/18	10/ 8	--	10/16	10/ 6	10/ 2	10/12	10/ 6
Rufous-sided Towhee	12/ 1	11/29	11/28	11/28	11/ 2	10/29	11/26	11/15	10/20	10/19	10/25	11/28	11/ 6	--	W	10/20	W
Chipping Sparrow	10/30	11/ 9	11/ 2	12/10	11/ 6	10/30	12/10	11/ 7	11/ 8	10/19	11/ 3	10/24	11/ 8	11/29	--	10/31	--
White-crowned Sparrow	11/19	10/31	11/24	11/ 8	11/ 8	--	--	10/18	--	0	0	0	--	--	10/18	10/19	10/18
Fox Sparrow	11/24	12/27	12/22	12/ 8	11/29	--	12/ 3	12/ 8	11/26	11/29	11/23	--	11/20	11/17	--	11/22	W
Lincoln's Sparrow	10/23	10/20	10/31	10/18	--	9/30	0	0	0	0	0	0	10/18	--	9/28	10/13	0
Swamp Sparrow				12/17	12/17	10/27	11/26	11/ 3	W	W	11/ 7	W	10/29	--	W	10/29	W

March 1971

MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

45

feeding grounds to resting areas. With them on Oct. 18 was a single Snow Goose, the first to be recorded at Irish Grove (Gladys Cole, Ilse and Herman Kuch, Carol Jones, Lynn Fowler, Paul Kalka and others). Snow Geese, which arrived as early as Oct. 3 at Blackwater Refuge (Armistead), were sighted in all Eastern Shore counties except Caroline. Blackwater Refuge remains the prime Maryland wintering area for Blue Geese; Armistead saw 250 there as early as Oct. 13. Other Blue Geese were found in Talbot County (Nov. 25 by Paul Haddaway) and on the Ocean City Christmas Count. We had an excellent wintering population of Canada Geese, as reflected by unusually high totals on Christmas Counts in their major Maryland wintering areas: 147,700 in southern Kent County, 55,680 in the St. Michaels area, 37,900 in southern Dorchester County, and 21,820 at Ocean City. These four counts alone totaled over a quarter of a million Canadas!

Ducks. Dates and localities of some of the best concentrations of ducks may be of interest to those who wonder where the best spots are to find each species: Gadwall, 30 at Eastern Neck Is., Jan. 3 (Christmas Bird Count); Pintail, 1,750 at Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge, Oct. 6 (Edward Folsom); Green-winged Teal, 43 at Irish Grove Sanctuary, Dec. 30 (C.B.C.); European Widgeon, 1 male on the pond on the south side of US 50 at Sandy Point, Oct. 31 (Carl W. Carlson and Harold Wierenga) to Nov. 21 (Chris G. Petrow); American Widgeon, 11,800 at Eastern Neck Refuge on Oct. 22 (Folsom); Common Goldeneye, 746 in the Annapolis--Gibson Island circle on Dec. 27 (C.B.C.); Bufflehead, 603, in the St. Michaels circle, Dec. 27 (C.B.C.); 7,000 Oldsquaws in a single flock 2 miles south of Kent Point on Dec. 27 (Jan Reese); King Eider, 8 at Ocean City inlet, Dec. 29 (C.B.C.); Ruddy Duck, 1,500 at Elliott Island, Dec. 31 (C.B.C.); Hooded Merganser, 85 in Kent County (C.B.C.); and Red-breasted Merganser, 121 at Crisfield, Dec. 30 (C.B.C.). Maryland observers seem to have completely missed a massive migration of scoters along the coast on Oct. 17; at Bethany Beach, Del. (just 6 miles north of the Maryland line) C. Edward Addy noted on that day the greatest scoter migration he had ever witnessed--flocks probably totaling over a million birds moving rapidly southward on gale force northwesterly winds on a flight that lasted all day.

Vultures. Ocean City for many years has reported more Turkey Vultures than any other Christmas Count in North America. Probably this will never happen again. First, the large roost north of St. Martin was abandoned several years ago; and now the Powellsville fire tower from which hundreds of flying birds could be observed has been closed. To Crisfield go the honors this year, with a total of 851 (5 per square mile). The Black Vulture was missed on the Ocean City count, but 62 were found at Crisfield and a record-high of 52 on the Baltimore count.

Hawks. Although this was not a major flight year for the Rough-legged Hawk, the species was widely distributed. The first was identified as early as Oct. 16 at Denton (Mrs. A. J. Fletcher); new high counts of 5 and 3 were obtained on the Catoctin and Crisfield Christmas Counts, and the species was encountered on 4 other Maryland Christmas Counts as well. Bald Eagles were seen at Triadelphia Reservoir (1), Annapolis (2),

Tanyard (2), Blackwater Refuge (7), Salisbury (1) and Marumsco (1). An immature Golden Eagle was spotted at Blackwater Refuge as early as Nov. 7 (Carlson), and was joined by an adult in time for the Christmas Count (Mrs. Cole and party). Another Golden was seen on the Jan. 3 Christmas Count in Kent County. An Osprey that wintered along the Chesapeake shore in western Talbot County was seen at Tilghman Island on several dates up to Dec. 24 (Don Meritt) and at Bozman on Jan. 13, 1971 (George Haddaway). The only Peregrine localities during the three-month period were Assateague National Seashore, Ocean City, and Irish Grove Sanctuary (Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Ireby and others).

Quail, Rails, Coots. Bobwhite populations were extraordinarily high this Christmas, with a record-breaking total of 490 at Ocean City and 365 at St. Michaels. For the first time, the state Christmas Count total (2,197) was well over 2,000. Chris Petrow found a late King Rail at Sandy Point on Nov. 21. At Deal Island Wildlife Management Area, Harry Armistead estimated 3,100 American Coots on Nov. 22--a very high number for the Lower Eastern Shore.

Sandhill Crane. A very tame immature Sandhill Crane appeared in late October on Route 12 a mile west of Snow Hill, was photographed, and seen at point blank range by many observers (including Carl Carlson, Gladys Cole, Barbara Rothgraber, Paul DuMont and Thomas Reed) through Nov. 7. What must have been the same bird was seen along US 13 about 6 miles north of Salisbury on Nov. 12 by Drs. Thomas Baskett and Robert Smith of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. The only previous Maryland record was the bird shot in Talbot County on Nov. 19, 1961 and identified by Richard Kleen (Maryland Birdlife 17: 102).

Plovers and Turnstones. American Golden Plovers rated a line in the fall departure table for the first time. Single birds were found as late as early November in 4 counties, as follows: Sycamore Landing Turf Farm in Montgomery County on Nov. 8 (having decreased from 12 on Sept. 27 and 7 on Oct. 25, Chris Petrow and Phil Faurot), Sandy Point State Park on Nov. 4 (Prof. Wierenga), Somerset County on Nov. 8 (Dyke) and Assateague Island on Nov. 7 (Robert W. Warfield). A Ruddy Turnstone seen at Sandy Point on Oct. 31 (Wierenga, Paul DuMont, Frances Pope, B. C. Getchell and others) is the latest recorded in Maryland west of Chesapeake Bay.

Woodcock. American Woodcock wintered in good numbers on the Coastal Plain, and were found for the first time on the Seneca and Triadelphia Christmas Counts in the Piedmont. Ocean City had an all-time high count of 21 individuals and Crisfield's record was broken with 18. Woodcock were seen on all Eastern Shore counts except Denton and Elkton.

Sandpipers. No particular trend was noted among the various shore-birds, but several individual items are noteworthy. In the late category were single Spotted Sandpipers at Oxford (Dec. 27, Don Meritt) and Seneca (Jan. 3) on the Christmas Counts, a Western Sandpiper at Blackwater on Nov. 21 (Armistead), a White-rumped Sandpiper at Sandy Point on Oct. 31 (Wierenga), and a Baird's and a Stilt Sandpiper at Blackwater Refuge on Nov. 7 (Carlson). There were more Long-billed Dowitcher reports than

ever before, but this suggests better observation rather than an increase in numbers; the first was at Lake Montebello in Baltimore City on Oct. 2 (Hank Kaestner), the next at Blackwater Refuge on Oct. 3 (Armistead and Harry Goldstein), and the last 2 at Blackwater on Nov. 7 (Carlson). In all cases Short-billed Dowitchers also were present and careful studies were made of the two species. Other noteworthy records from Lake Montebello will be published in a separate paper by Hank Kaestner. A Hudsonian Godwit discovered at Blackwater Refuge on Oct. 3 (Armistead and Goldstein) is a new species for Dorchester County, and only the fourth for Maryland away from the coast. In the high count department we have 850 Dunlins at Blackwater at the peak of migration on Oct. 31 (Armistead) and a wintering flock of 74 at Oxford on Dec. 27 (Meritt); 10 Stilt Sandpipers at Blackwater on Oct. 3 and 8 there on Oct. 17 (Armistead); and 125 Purple Sandpipers and 1,232 Dunlins on the Dec. 29 Ocean City Christmas Count.

Terns and Dovekies. A Caspian Tern seen on Oct. 31 at Blackwater Refuge is the latest on record for Dorchester County (Armistead). Late, as well as north of their normal range, were 2 Royal Terns at Sandy Point State Park on Nov. 15 (Prof. Wierenga). The Middle Atlantic Coast (New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia) experienced a 'wreck' of Dovekies during the mid-November northeasterly storms, especially during the period Nov. 12-15. Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Ireys saw Dovekies at Fenwick Island, Del., on Nov. 12 and 15, and drove to Ocean City inlet to get a Maryland record on Nov. 13. The only other Maryland Dovekie this season was found dead on the road at Ocean City on Dec. 16 by Marcia Lakeman.

Cuckoos, Owls, Hummingbirds. Late Yellow-billed Cuckoos were noted on Oct. 23 at both Old Town (James Paulus) and Hughes Hollow near Seneca (Paul W. Woodward). The Short-eared Owls at Poolesville reached an all-time high of 11 birds (Seneca Christmas Count); unfortunately, their feeding area is about to become a housing development. The only Saw-whet Owl report submitted was of a bird banded at Damsite in Kent County on Nov. 8 (Mr. and Mrs. Edward Mendenhall). Late Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were seen on Oct. 7 at Highland (Mrs. Dorothy Rauth) and on Oct. 6 at Denton (Mrs. A. J. Fletcher).

Woodpeckers. No fewer than 88 Pileated Woodpeckers were noted on the Maryland Christmas Counts, thanks to good weather and good coverage. This species appears to be holding its own despite the continuing loss of deciduous woodland in suburbia. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker numbers on the Christmas Counts also were high this winter, with a record-breaking 29 birds at Seneca and with 25 at Ocean City (23 of them actually in the Pocomoke swamp); Cumberland had the astonishing total of 12, the fourth highest tally in Maryland this season.

Swallows, Ravens, Nuthatches. Tree Swallows lingered into late December in unprecedented numbers, attested by 759 on the Ocean City Christmas Count (where the previous high was 435) and 156 on the Crisfield count. The only Common Raven seen east of Garrett County was a lone individual over Monument Knob on Oct. 3 (Dr. John Richards).

Red-breasted Nuthatches were found during the period in 11 of the 20 counties from which reports were received, but in most counties sightings were limited to single observations.

Warblers. Since the peak of the warbler migration passes through in September, the notes for later in the season deal primarily with late departures. In spite of the small number of banding stations in operation, and thanks to the mild weather through the late autumn, several noteworthy departure dates are available: Black-and-white Warbler at Blackwater Refuge on Nov. 22 (Billie Pyle and Montgomery Chapter trip); Tennessee and Nashville Warblers banded at Damsite on Oct. 31 (Mendinhalls); Nashville and Orange-crowned seen at Sandy Point on Oct. 31 (Carlson); Cape May seen at Irish Grove Sanctuary on Oct. 30 (Mrs. Cole); Yellow-throated Warbler seen at Huntingtown on Nov. 26 (Joan Lusby); Pine and Palm Warblers seen at Blackwater Refuge on Nov. 22 (Montgomery Chapter trip); Western Palm Warbler seen at Denton on Nov. 28 (Mrs. A. J. Fletcher); Northern Waterthrush seen at Pennyfield Lock in Montgomery County on Nov. 27 (Joan Lusby); Connecticut Warbler seen at Bethesda on Nov. 7 (Dr. Fred Evenden); Yellowthroat banded at Hughes Hollow near Seneca on Oct. 29 (Paul Woodward); Hooded Warbler killed at the WBAL tower on Oct. 15 (Hank Kaestner); and the following three species at Damsite by the Mendinhalls: Yellow-breasted Chat (banded on Oct. 28), Wilson's Warbler (seen on Oct. 15), and Canada Warbler (banded on Oct. 29). The only Orange-crowned Warbler reported from the Piedmont was seen at Ashton on Oct. 10 by George Hurley.

Northern Finches. All of the northern finches were conspicuous by their scarcity. Most observers saw not a single Evening Grosbeak, Pine Siskin or crossbill. What few birds there were took advantage of the abundant wild foods and stayed away from feeding stations. It took the concerted field effort of the Christmas Counts to locate a few Evening Grosbeaks and Pine Siskins; and even then the highest of the six grosbeak counts was 15 individuals and the highest of the seven siskin counts was 6 birds. There were only three observations of Red Crossbills: 7 birds flying over the Deal Island Wildlife Management Area on Nov. 22 (Armistead), 3 on Catoctin Mountain on Dec. 8 (Carlson), and a small flock at Ashton on an unspecified date (Charles Bostick).

Towhee. Rufous-sided Towhee counts broke previous records on several of the Christmas Counts. Of a total of 1,637 individuals recorded, 442 were enumerated at Ocean City, 268 at Salisbury, 226 at Crisfield, and 223 in Lower Kent County. No count missed the towhee this year.

Sparrows. Grasshopper Sparrows probably winter regularly in small numbers in Maryland, but because of their secretive habits they are seldom found at this season. Two were detected in a roadside flock of sparrows on the Jan. 3 Seneca count, and 1 in the Fairmount sector of the Crisfield count on Dec. 30 (Armistead). The White-throated Sparrow was represented by unusually high numbers in most areas. Seven of the Christmas Counts had more than a thousand individuals, and the State total was 13,670 birds. Counts of Slate-colored Juncos and Tree Sparrows, on the other hand, were below normal.



Snow Bunting. At Sandy Point State Park the Snow Bunting population built up from 4 on Oct. 30 to 40 on Nov. 17 (Prof. Wierenga). Bruce Beehler photographed a flock of 104 birds there, Nov. 25-27 (Maryland Birdlife 26: 122). Then on Dec. 11, 25 appeared and 3 were still present for the Annapolis Christmas Count. From 1 to 3 individuals were also seen on the Accokeek, Crisfield and Seneca counts, and a flock of 100 was spotted by the Assateague party on the Ocean City count. This is the first time that the Snow Bunting has been found in more than two Christmas Count areas in the same season.

Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife  
Migratory Bird Populations Station, Laurel

## MARYLAND'S FIRST WINTERING OVENBIRD

*Eleanor C. Robbins*

At about 1:35 p.m., December 26, 1970 (during the Triadelphia Christmas Count), I took another glance out the window before going shopping. Walking on the ground five feet from the house was an olive colored bird, slightly smaller than a House Sparrow. It had an orange crown, bordered on each side by black; its underparts were streaked with black. I called to the only other person in the house, 14-year-old Nancy, "What is the little bird on the ground?"

"It looks like an Ovenbird," said she.

I spread more seeds, left a can of fat and a few mealworms on the ground and went shopping. When I entered at 5 p.m., 17-year-old George met me with: "You won't believe what I just saw!"

On December 27, experienced birders Dr. B. C. Getchell and Vernon Kleen saw it, as did Miss Betty Getchell, Arthur Alexander, and Stuart and Jane Robbins. Chan and I took kodachromes and colored movies. Chan trapped and banded the Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*) on January 9. He determined by the absence of rusty tips on the tertials that it was probably an adult. Its wing chord measurement of 77 mm. indicated that it was a male. It had a trace of subcutaneous fat and seemed to be thriving in spite of 18° night temperatures.

At 7:15 a.m., January 10, when the first light of day was just beginning, Mr. Robbins saw a prowling cat pounce on the Ovenbird. His quick action caused the cat to drop the bird from its mouth. The Ovenbird walked around that day, but it must have been so injured that it died during the night, as we did not see it again. It never found the mealworms I put out for it; neither did I see it eat the fat. Instead, it ate small seeds from a commercial bird seed mixture.

This is the first record of an Ovenbird wintering in Maryland. It normally winters in Mexico, the West Indies, Central America and northern South America.

7900 Brooklyn Bridge Rd., Laurel



## COMING EVENTS

- Apr. 24 BALTIMORE Upper Loch Raven. 8:00 A. M. Leader: Mr. Charles M. Buchanan
- 24 MONTGOMERY C & O Canal
- 25 BALTIMORE C & O Canal and Potomac River (Great Falls - Violet Locks) Leader: Mr. Hank Kaestner, 7:30 A.M.
- 25 ALLEGANY Savage River Dam trip. Meet 2 P. M. at Bartons'
- 26 WICOMICO Monthly meeting
- 27 BALTIMORE Lake Roland 8 A. M. Leader: Mrs. Carl Lubbert
- 27 PATUXENT Monthly meeting
- 28 ANNE ARUNDEL National Arboretum of the U. S. Leader: Mrs. Gordon Steen. 8:30 A.M. at Parole parking lot Riva Rd. entrance.
- May 1 STATEWIDE May Count
- 4 BALTIMORE Lake Roland 8 A.M. Leader: Miss Jane Daniels
- 7-8-9 STATEWIDE Ocean City Convention, Hastings-Miramar
- 8 BALTIMORE Finally Farm, Phoenix, Md. 8 A. M.
- 11 BALTIMORE Lake Roland 8 A.M. Leader: Mrs. C. L. Conley
- 15-16 ALLEGANY Work days at Carey Run Sanctuary. Volunteer to help by calling Billie Taylor.
- 15 ANNE ARUNDEL Monthly meeting - Picnic Supper. 4:30 P. M. Co-ordinator: Mrs. Anna Paradee
- 15 BALTIMORE Mill Creek Sanctuary in Talbot County. Meet 8:30 A. M. at Sanctuary.
- 16 BALTIMORE Rock Run Sanctuary in Harford County. Meet at Sanctuary 8:30 A.M. Leader: Mr. C. Douglas Hackman
- 20 MONTGOMERY Monthly meeting 8 P.M. "Birds of Tical, Guatemala". Speaker: Mr. Philip A. Dumont
- 21-23 BALTIMORE Cape May, New Jersey, weekend. Reservations with Miss Grace Naumann by May 12
- 22 ANNE ARUNDEL Quiet Waters Farm. Leaders: Mr. & Mrs. John Ford. Meet at gate alongside Hillsmere Gate, Forest Drive and Bay Ridge Ave. 7:40 A. M.
- 22 BALTIMORE Patapsco State Park (Glen Artney Area). Leader: Mr. Irving Hampe, Sr. Meet Mr. & Mrs. John Chalk, Jr. at Hutzlers' Westview Parking 7 A.M.
- 22 MONTGOMERY Annual Chapter Sea Voyage from Ocean City, Md.
- 23 ALLEGANY Flower Walk. Meet at Carey Run 2:30 P. M. Leaders Mrs. C. Gordon Taylor and Mrs. Ronald Rosher.
- 24 WICOMICO Monthly meeting
- 25 PATUXENT Monthly meeting
- June 5 BALTIMORE Picnic Supper
- 9 ANNE ARUNDEL Corcoran Woods. Meet Route 50 Service Road, 8:30 A. M. Leader: Mrs. Neville Kirk
- 22 PATUXENT Picnic at Scott's Cove, Rocky Gorge Reservoir, Harding Road, Howard County. Bring own food about 6:30 p.m.
- 27 ALLEGANY Anniversary Day - Carey Run Sanctuary. Walk 2:30 P. M. Covered dish supper, 5:30 P. M. Chairman: Miss Nan Livingstone

CONTENTS, MARCH 1971

Christmas Counting, 1970—Adventures & Results	David W. Holmes	3
Mountain Bluebird Sighted in Oldtown, Maryland	James Paulus	11
Montgomery County Avocet	Isaac C. Sanchez	11
An Oregon Junco at Cockeysville	Frances B. Pope	12
The President's Page	V. Edwin Unger	13
Nesting Behavior of a Pair of Sparrow Hawks	Richard Krejci	14
Know Your Sanctuaries—Mill Creek	Dickson J. Preston	17
MOS Bluebird Project, 1970	Lawrence Zeleny	28
MOS Receives Outdoor Writers Conservation Award		30
Winter Bird Survey of Central Maryland	Chandler S. Robbins	31
Barrow's Goldeneye Seen at Ocean City, Maryland	Carl W. Carlson	39
Fall Sighting of Northern Phalaropes in Talbot	Dickson J. Preston	40
In Memoriam—Carl B. Lubbert	Gladys H. Cole	41
The Season—October, November, December 1970	Chandler S. Robbins	42
Maryland's First Wintering Ovenbird	Eleanor C. Robbins	50
Coming Events		51

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